FREEDOM AND ARTISTIC CREATIVITY IN KANT

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By

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ABSTRACT

The notion of artistic creativity has become so commonplace in our thought that the only question remaining, it seems, is whether anyone (or everyone) other than the artist is capable of being creative. Even noting that this notion, used in the sense that we tend so readily to accept, is no more than two hundred years old, is unlikely to prevent the raising of at least one eyebrow at the suggestion that the idea is not as unproblematic as it might at first appear. The purpose of this thesis is to revitalize the belief in human creativity by returning to its primary philosophical source: Immanuel Kant.

By doing this, I hope to revive at least the possibility of serious philosophical debate on an issue that is now either accepted as a closed case (as it typically is by aestheticians), or dismissed as an insufficiently philosophical topic (as is often done by non-aestheticians). In fact, the belief of human creativity as we now know it is ultimately the result of an enormous metaphysical and epistemological effort by Kant to preserve the possibility of moral freedom. Losing this historical context has caused 'creativity' to lose its philosophical bite. Regaining this context -- the essence of the current project -- should force us to think seriously again about a problem that opens out, not merely on major issues in aesthetics, but on the major philosophical tide of the past two hundred years.

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INTRODUCTION

> "And what about the man who... believes that there is something fair itself and is able to catch sight both of it and of what participates in it, and doesn't believe that what participates is it itself, nor that it itself is what participates -- is he, in your opinion, living in a dream or is he awake?"
> "He's quite awake," he said.
> "Wouldn't we be right in saying that this man's thought, because he knows, is knowledge, while the other's is opinion because he opines?"
> "Most certainly."[1]

> "[T]he poetic man... uses names and phrases to color each of the arts. He himself doesn't understand; but he imitates in such a way as to seem, to men whose condition is like his own and who observe only speeches, to speak well."[2]

Socrates' words to the erotic young Glaucon can be taken as a teaching intended for all future philosophers. Beauty (the "fair") itself -- as opposed to mere examples of it -- is not to be found in the world of particulars. It is essentially an object of knowledge, not of sensation or feeling. Most importantly, beauty is something to be discovered, not made. This is the reason for the particular emphasis on the (alleged) beauty in art. It is not the artist, but the thinker, who is qualified to determine what is beautiful. The artist himself "doesn't understand" -- that is, he does not have knowledge -- and therefore thinks he is presenting the beautiful in the mere sensuous object

that he designs. In other words, he thinks that he is designing the beautiful. The danger to the philosopher is that by attracting those people who have the innate impulse toward the beautiful, the artist draws them away from the pursuit of truth. Art can trap at the level of sense experience precisely those people who desire beauty, but who simply do not realize that truth is the real object of such desire.

The only way, it would seem, to save the artist from the status of a corrupter of souls, would be to show that art can indeed be beautiful. There are two possible ways to accomplish this. The first is to claim that reason is not the means to the experience of real beauty. This is tantamount to a rejection of the ultimate efficacy of reason itself, inasmuch as it rests on the belief that there are 'truths', for lack of a better word, which are outside of the rational order of things -- i.e. which are outside of the realm of knowledge (that is, nature). This would seem to put a deadly limit on philosophy itself, and hence, understandably, this way of saving the beauty of art is not considered acceptable to any philosopher after Socrates, until -- as we shall see -- the 18th century.

The second way to save art -- the one chosen by 'scientists of beauty' after Aristotle -- is to claim that art can be beautiful to the extent that it accurately

represents nature. In fact, according to such a view, the accurate representation of nature is central to the meaning of beauty. Even here, though, nature -- that is, being -- remains the standard of what is to be judged as beautiful. Here, 'imitation' is used as a term of praise, whereas there is a certain note of belittlement in the way Socrates uses it. The metaphysical underpinnings of the more and less sympathetic views of imitation need not be entered into here. The important thing is that the only essential point of contrast between the two views of art here in question -- broadly, the Platonic and Aristotelian views -- is whether the artist really is accurately representing the independently existent 'nature of things'. That this is all an artist could possibly be doing, is accepted by both approaches.

The core assumption of aesthetics from Socrates on, was that the beautiful either depends on, or is identifiable with, conceptual knowledge, and hence is determined by reason. That is, regardless of whether real beauty can be found in art or not, it is rational thought that will decide both what and where it is. And the typical Platonic battle of the philosopher versus the poets reveals the deepest significance of this view: if art either is or points us toward the true -- as the beautiful is or does -- then it is moral; if it neither is nor points us toward truth, then it

is immoral.

Two major developments in the history of thought -- neither of which is directly related to the philosophy of art -- cut a path to the rejection of the classical belief in the rational determination of the beautiful. The first is the primarily (in terms of influence) Christian notion of a creating and judging God. The second is the New Science.

The idea of a 'first principle' which has the role of both a final and efficient cause of the world of moving things -- that is, the notion of an unmoved mover which generates things in the manner of a moving cause -- flies in the face of reason understood as the ordering principle of the universe. That God's own apparent movement can be explained by neither efficient nor final causality -- the former would suggest that God can be changed from without, the latter that He is incomplete -- affords Him a kind of freedom in action which is explicitly denied by traditional rationality. This is precisely what the Christian philosopher must simply accept on faith, consituting a turning point in philosophy: the attempt to limit the efficacy of reason to a specific realm, and to suggest that there is a part of reality which, in principle, is beyond reason. Proofs for the existence of God can merely attempt show that some first being must exist, but cannot explain how this being can do the rationally inexplicable.

Furthermore, the Christian doctrine brings with it the notion of sin, and of a judgment to be passed on us by God. This makes us morally culpable -- i.e. responsible for our actions -- which seems to presuppose that we are free to choose how we will act. The medieval Christian thinkers, however, had recourse to a theory of motion -- the Aristotelian one -- which allowed them to make freedom a matter of following the rule of our nature. That is, a human being is a creature of a specific type, which means that it has an essence established by God. To act according to that essence -- to live, for example, as a properly rational animal -- is to act morally. Creatures other than humans act according to their respective natures by 'instinct', so to speak. Humans are free in the sense of having a choice to make between the path of nature and that of the unnatural. The unnatural is not-being, and if God is being, then not-being is evil. Thus, it is natural teleology, as designed by God, that determines the moral and the immoral.

In the wake of this centuries-long moral tradition, the rejection of natural teleology by modern science seemed to leave ethics in a questionable position. If we cannot be moved by a natural <u>internal</u> impetus -- a telos -- but only by external forces which attract or repel us mechanistically, then freedom seems to become a vacuous

concept. Strictly speaking, freedom comes to appear to be unnatural. And running parallel to this is the reduction of art to the status of yet another natural (i.e. physical) object affecting us by the same attractive or repellent forces as any other, and thus not a matter of moral concern. Beauty, understood as an object of desire, is now reducible to a matter of mere sensuous agreeability, and hence is subjectively, rather than objectively (i.e. conceptually) determined. The beautiful is no longer tied to the truth, but merely to the empirical facts which may cause the sensation of pleasure which we identify as the experience of beauty. The true, in turn, is no longer tied to the good. Thus the traditional project of philosophy as the unifier of the true, good, and beautiful -- that is, the traditional role of the philosopher as the man who brings coherence to the whole of human experience -- seems to be a failure. Science, the traditional starting point of philosophy proper, has now bankrupted philosophy.

Immanuel Kant makes a systematic attempt to revitalize philosophy in a way that does not simply require a disavowal of, or disbelief in, the discoveries of modern science, but which overcomes the apparent debunking of philosophy. In fact, he accepts the conclusion of the scientists regarding the mechanism of nature. He also accepts that this conclusion makes freedom, and hence morality, unnatural, and

that it makes beauty subjective. His bold claims are that it is precisely the unnaturalness of freedom that is the key to proving its reality, and that the subjectivity of the experience of 'mere sensuous beauty' is essential to defining its relationship to morality.

In essence, Kant argues that our true freedom (or pure morality) exists completely independently of nature, which is, nevertheless, the only world we experience. In other words, we, in effect, live in the natural realm, but there is another realm in which we also exist -- although we cannot experience ourselves as existing within it -- and in which we are free causes (i.e. moral agents). The problem in this case, is to explain how freedom in experience -- that is, within the natural world -- is possible. If there is no discernible link between our natural and 'unnatural' existences, then our freedom seems to be no more than a hopeful assertion, and one which does not affect our lives as we experience them.

Kant attempts to solve this problem by way of the subjectivity of the experience of beauty. This experience, he argues, is free precisely because it is not tied to conceptual thought, i.e. because it is singular, and hence not responded to as an object of pre-determined interest or desire. In order to be experienced as something other than an object of natural desire (or aversion) -- and thus to be

exempt from the mechanism of nature -- beauty must be essentially unnatural. This means that even natural objects which are judged to be beautiful, cannot be so judged except by believing, or 'pretending', that they are not part of nature. This means that nature is not the standard of beauty, but is beautiful by some unnatural standard. This standard is set by art. The artist is thus a person who does not merely imitate nature, but who makes something which nature itself -- insofar as it is judged to be beautiful -- must seem to imitate. We thus see the first consistent and coherent philosophic defence of the notion of the artist as a creator. Art brings something into being which in no sense existed before. Through art, a mere human can attain a god-like status. This powerful analogy between God and the artist is at the root of the trivialized notion of creativity that we unblinkingly accept today.

Kant's defence of creativity is necessary in order to make freedom a part of human experience, and hence to make ethics meaningful in the age of modern science. The experience of the beautiful is the link between our real freedom -- which is beyond experience -- and our experience of freedom, which, as part of nature, is not truly free. And the experience of beauty is to be had, most definitively, through the work of art, precisely because it is unnatural.

Kant's systematic attempt to make moral freedom a part of experience, and the need to make artistic creation the key to this attempt, is the topic of this thesis. In Chapter 1, I will show the manner whereby Kant makes free (i.e. moral) causality possible, and examine his explanation of this freedom. Chapter 2 addresses the problem of making freedom a part of our experience -- that is, part of our existence as natural beings. Specifically, beauty is shown to be the object of the only truly free experience, and art the standard by which nature is judged to be beautiful. In the final chapter, I show how the impossibility of true moral freedom in experience forces Kant to accept a theory of 'apparent freedom', which, in order to be made coherent -- i.e. to save for us any sense of moral responsibility, of right and wrong -- requires some experiential link between our real, unnatural freedom, and this apparent freedom. The link, which occupies the concluding stage of the chapter, is the freedom of the beautiful, and hence of art.

1. Plato, The Republic (Allan Bloom, translator), New York: Basic Books, 1968, 476d.

2. Republic, 601a.

Chapter One

FREEDOM AS AN EXEMPTION FROM NATURE

Rational Desire: Its Defence and Definition

In his Critique of Judgment[1], Kant sets out to redress classical aesthetic theory in general. He does this, in the first place, by driving a wedge between the beautiful and the good. This is intended, in part, to thwart classical doubts -- best exemplified by Plato's -- about the beneficiality of art, or indeed about the compatibility of philosophy and art. In ultimate effect, he will be seen to be siding with the poets in the Platonic debate over the true domain of the beautiful, but to be doing so for the sake of incorporating the poets and their products into the realm of the philosophically useful and explicable. In the second place, by removing works of art (qua art) from the arena of conceptual thought, he rejects the Aristotelian understanding of art as, so to speak, purposiveness with purpose. Again with profound irony, Kant attempts to rejuvenate teleological explanations, but in an area explicitly held to be beyond any 'nature-bound' explanation.

The net effect of Kant's argument is (a) the overturning of most aspects of the theory of art as 'imitation', (b) the intimation that an artist's work is not

'lacking' in conceptual determinacy, but is, rather, beyond conceptual thought, and, following on this, (c) the invention of an essentially realist springboard towards the idealist view of the (true) artist as a person who -- by creating a new world governed by new laws -- is closer than others to a transcendence of the inadequate phenomenal world, and to making us not merely 'spectators' of a 'pseudo-noumenal' world (Kant's own relatively modest view), but truly witnesses to the shaping of reality by the hands of the makers of culture. The created world of art, for Kant, will be seen to be analogous -- or perhaps more precisely, parallel -- to the highest products of reason, understood in the Kantian way.

And herein lies the central purpose of this thesis. Kant's historically significant break with the tradition, and his own theory of the nature of artistic activity, are grounded in his complete reassessment of the relationship between being and reason. This, in turn, is necessitated by the modern view of nature, and the failure -- in Kant's eyes, at least -- of modern philosophy to reconstitute itself in such a way as to preserve the worthwhileness of its defining questions in the face of modern science. Such a radical reconstitution has the ironic aim of rejecting the most fundamental assumptions of the tradition in order to save at least the plausibility of the traditional objects of

philosophical thought, namely the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Given my motivating contention that what has been lost from much of the current earnest talk about human creativity is any sense of why we are talking about it -- that is, of why we find such talk so fundamentally unproblematic -- it is of paramount importance to address precisely the above issues. This will of course require examining Kant's theory of beauty, since -- for reasons which will be explained in the appropriate place -- it is the changes he makes to this concept which allow him to reclaim beauty from the knowers, on behalf of the artists. This achievement is the one which holds the key to his defense of creativity against the traditional objections to it. Even this depth of inquiry, however, will be insufficient for my purposes. What is needed is a careful retracing of the steps which lead to this theory of beauty. This means primarily an examination of that object of Kant's concern which will become the animating concept of his aesthetic theory -- freedom. We need to address the meaning of this concept for Kant, and especially its relationship to experience, in order to fully appreciate his reasons for rejecting all variants of the classical notion that aesthetics -- the science of beauty -- is essentially coincidental with the science of being (i.e. with reason).

Rather than undertake a survey of Kant's critical philosophy, concluding with a discussion of how beauty fits into the 'big picture', a more natural way to enter this topic is through the theory of beauty itself. The reason for this is that Kant himself offers us a perfect point of entry, one which displays the extent to which he wishes to make freedom the defining issue of aesthetics, as well as pointing up the fundamental issue of the possibility of a freedom which is somehow -- or to some extent -- in experience, but not of it. He begins his analysis of beauty, in the third Critique, by distinguishing our response to it from the only other responses indicating satisfaction. The passage, though straightforward, is imbued with the results of Kant's earlier inquiries, as well as with the essence of his theories of beauty and aesthetic experience.

> The agreeable is what GRATIFIES a man; the beautiful what simply PLEASES him; the good what is ESTEEMED (approved), i.e. that on which he sets objective worth.... Of all these three kinds of delight, that of taste in the beautiful may be said to be the one and only disinterested and free delight; for, with it, no interest, whether of sense [as in gratification] or reason [as in esteem], extorts approval. [3rd Critique, section 5:49]

It must immediately be noted that the "good" referred to here is not exclusively the good associated with the notion of the good will in Kant's ethical theory. As R.A.C.

Macmillan observes, Kant here "seems to speak of the Good loosely, as one would speak of good things"[2], though he includes both the 'useful' and the 'moral' among these. But Macmillan notes this general use of the term 'good' in the context of his claim that there is a major blunder in Kant's distinction between the good and the beautiful in this passage. I believe that Macmillan is misunderstanding Kant's point, and that the passage is consistent with Kant's 'standard' views on the good. Nevertheless, an analysis of Macmillan's error will serve well as an explication of the quoted passage.

Macmillan claims[3] that the problem with the distinction lies in Kant's attempt to make interestedness the key point of comparison among the agreeable, beautiful and good, and especially between the last two. He writes that the contrasts drawn are "miserable" and "never clearly defined."[4] Immediately, the seed of his larger error, and the key to Kant's actual argument, becomes apparent. A careful reading of the quoted passage, and of the entire section of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" in which it appears, makes clear that at no time is Kant directly comparing the beautiful with the agreeable and the good. He is comparing the satisfactions associated with our experiences of the three. In other words, he is comparing three types of experience, not the three things themselves.

That is, he is comparing our responses to stimuli (phenomena), to particular instances of the agreeable, beautiful and good. The full significance of this fact, and its importance in refuting Macmillan, will be seen shortly. For the time being, it can simply be noted that there is something essential to the nature of the beautiful that can be inferred from Kant's decision to compare it to the agreeable and good only indirectly, through a comparison of responses to particular instances. The inference to be made, and it is more clearly defined elsewhere, is that in the case of the beautiful, somewhat like the agreeable but entirely unlike the good, particular examples are all that is available for comparison. It is of the nature of the beautiful that, qua beautiful, it does not conform to any pre-determined laws of reason. There are no ideas or concepts to which I 'compare' the representations before my mind to determine whether they are beautiful. This <u>is</u>, however, the method whereby I judge particular things, or possible courses of action, to be good. There is nothing within the purview of the study of the beautiful that corresponds to the maxim "One should always tell the truth", for example, let alone to the concept 'hammer'. This is the central point of contrast between the beautiful and the good, for Kant. The question of interest is merely derivative of this, as we shall see.

And this brings us back to Macmillan. If, as he seems to have read it, Kant is comparing the beautiful and the good directly, then -- whether it be the lower or higher good, or both -- he is comparing particulars to universals, without so much as noting the fact. Furthermore, the fact that we are dealing with a comparison of types of delight, i.e. that Kant is comparing feelings, would certainly suggest that he is not referring to universals which act as the a priori laws for the judgment of phenomena, but to the phenomena themselves. In the case of the mediately good (i.e. the useful), for example, if you are building a table, the concept 'hammer' will not occasion a feeling of approval (the satisfaction appropriate to the experience of the good), but this <u>particular</u> hammer will. You are delighted by the real existence of the object. That is, your interest, which Kant identifies with such delight [<u>3rd Critique</u>, section 2:42], lies in its existence, not in the reasoned determination of what object will, <u>if</u> it exists, serve as a means to your ends. That is perhaps enough to establish that -- in the case of the merely useful -- Kant is dealing exclusively with the experience of particulars here -- with the felt responses caused by phenomena of this type. Bearing this in mind, though, we must turn to the more complex issue of the morally good, the Kantian theory of which Macmillan believes makes his contrast of the

beautiful and the good inconsistent, if not incoherent.

Macmillan says of the supposed contrast of the beautiful and the good on the issue of interest, that "we hardly expect it from Kant for whom the Will has no interest of any kind, not even personal, in its objects."[5] He takes this as evidence that Kant has drastically reformed his ethical theory, or at least allowed sober second thought to soften its edges. It is this change of heart, he implies, that also causes Kant to speak of the good in the 'loose' sense that he does here, rather than exclusively in terms of the moral good.[6] This would, if we were speaking only of useful things, make the notion of interest in the good explicable; however, as Macmillan perplexedly notes, Kant explicitly includes the 'absolute' or moral good among the items in which we have an interest. And, he maintains, herein lies the insoluble problem with Kant's attempted contrast. Citing a footnote from section 2 of the "Analytic of the Beautiful", Macmillan's argument against Kant runs as follows:

> He appears to have felt the need of explanation, for he adds in a note, that pure moral judgments "may be quite disinterested, but yet very interesting, i.e. not based upon an interest, but bringing an interest with it." But in this theory of the Good there is nothing to constitute a contrast, such as he has in view; for it is eminently true of the Beautiful also that an interest follows our judgment.[7]

Again we are reminded of Macmillan's initial error of

mistaking a comparison of responses to existent things for a comparison of proper objects. Here we see how it causes problems for his reading of Kant's intentions. It is true that the faculty of moral judgment -- pure practical reason -- cannot make interested decisions about its proper objects. But the absolute good -- that which is good in itself, and not as a means -- is, as befits the disinterestedly rational method by which it is discovered, not an existent thing external to us. It is, rather, an appropriate course of action, i.e. one which reason determines through application of the categorical imperative.[8] Macmillan seems to be taking this object of pure practical reason -- the universalizable maxim -- to be that which Kant is here claiming is responded to interestedly. This would mean, for example, that interest, which is connected with the empirical aspect of our nature, is a determining factor in the process of choosing truth-telling as a good course of action. This would, for reasons that will be explained in due course, subvert Kant's claim that our moral actions are free, which is of the essence of his ethical theory. Were Kant saying this, it would indeed betoken a drastic alteration of his philosophy, as Macmillan suggests. This, however, is not what Kant is claiming in the passage under discussion.

Reason operates without interest in determining whether

or not I should tell the truth. Once this has been determined, though, we must recall that the categorical imperative demands more than this mere determination. It demands that we act in accordance with the universalizable maxim.[9] The fact that we have arrived at the choice of action by way of reason alone, i.e. disinterestedly, is the proof of our freedom. The ultimate cause of the action is not material (that is, spatio-temporal), and hence in our moral actions we are not merely matter in motion, determined in our 'actions' (which would then be simply motions) by the causal mechanisms of nature, as discovered by natural science. We must remember, though, that acting on such good maxims means, among other things, imposing our rationally (i.e. freely) chosen laws of conduct upon the spatio-temporal realm. As John Zammito has phrased it, "Reason in its moral legislation must legislate to phenomena as though they were noumena."[10] More exactly, we must make the phenomena obey the laws that their underlying noumena are obeying, thereby making our experience noumenal (i.e. free) in this respect, though still phenomenal in every other respect. In other words, our moral freedom means precisely the ability to put matter in motion by the dictates of reason, and not merely as yet another link in the chain of material causes. Principles of action determined by interest or inclination, rather than by reason, are the ways

we move other than when we have transcended the causal laws of nature. In such cases, what we perceive as interests or experience as inclinations are the effects of spatio-temporal objects upon the spatio-temporal aspect of our nature, and, once again, modern science does not allow any spatio-temporal objects to be exempted from its mechanistic laws of motion.[11]

Still, moral action must take place within the spatio-temporal realm. Its freedom lies in its cause, which is not spatio-temporal. Further discussion of the relation of rational causes to spatio-temporal effects must be temporarily deferred. For the time being, it need only be reiterated that an action is free if its cause is entirely outside of the world of experience, and this is the case with actions chosen by disinterested reason. Such actions, which are the moral good (good in themselves), are held in the mind as universals or concepts, but this is not enough. They must, as noted, be acted upon; that is, they must be put into practice in the world of experience. The reason for this is fairly clear. We must move in the world we perceive as spatio-temporal -- we are capable of no other experience of life. The situations in which the moral law becomes relevant are precisely those in which we have no choice but to act. In these situations, it is natural for us to act according to private desire, i.e. to let desire or

aversion determine our course of action. The role of practical reason is not so much to supplant desire, as to restrain and inform it. Reason does not tell us that we ought not to desire any course of action. It tells us which course we ought to desire. In other words, once reason has established that I should tell the truth, I will -- given that I am in a situation in which I must act -- desire to tell the truth. The real existence of truth-telling -- that is, its existence in the realm of experience -- will meet with my approval (an interested form of satisfaction), because I have discovered, through reason, that actions of this kind are good. This is what Kant means, in the passage quoted at the outset of this discussion, when he says that the good is "that on which [a man] sets objective worth." A particular case of truth-telling -- of the action performed in the spatio-temporal realm -- is a source of delight because it corresponds to a non-spatio-temporal concept which is good. This rationally informed interest holds a key to Kant's attempt to bring noumena and phenomena together in the case of moral action. We are acting and responding with interest phenomenally, and hence 'saving the appearances', as it were. And yet, noumenally, these same actions and responses are free (i.e. disinterested). We are moving as freedom requires and as nature demands. One of Kant's most straightforward explanations of this two-

sidedness of nature is the following:

> [The moral law] gives to the sensible world, as sensuous nature... the form of an intelligible world, i.e., the form of supersensuous nature, without interfering with the mechanism of the former. Nature... is the existence of things under laws. The sensuous nature of rational beings in general is their existence under empirically conditioned laws, and therefore it is, from the point of view of reason, heteronomy. The supersensuous nature of the same beings... is their existence according to laws which are independent of all empirical conditions and which therefore belong to the autonomy of pure reason.... The law of this autonomy is the moral law, and it, therefore, is the fundamental law of supersensuous nature and of a pure world of the understanding, whose counterpart must exist in the world of sense without interfering with the laws of the latter.... [T]he moral law... determines our will to impart to the sensuous world the form of a system of rational beings.[12]

We put something into the world of experience -- the "counterpart" of the world of supersensuous nature -- which we have molded out of sensuous clay, but which conforms to the laws of sensuous nature in such a way that it appears to have been naturally determined like all else in experience.

Still, in the case of the good -- of the absolute good as well as the merely useful -- Kant says that "the concept of an end is implied, and consequently the relation of reason to (at least possible) willing, and thus a delight in the existence of an Object or action, i.e. some interest or other." [Third Critique, section 4:46] The delight is felt at the experience of the existence of the good thing, not at the mere thought (or representation) of it; and the desire

(interest) in question is the desire that the good thing (the concept to which the representation corresponds) be realized in the world of experience, not a desire that it (the concept) be the good. In other words, the concept of the good -- what ought to be -- is arrived at disinterestedly, and is the law of supersensuous nature, but this choice necessarily 'produces' an interest in making the 'ought' an 'is'. This is what Kant means, in the footnote cited by Macmillan, when he speaks of the pure moral judgment "bringing an interest with it". We have an interest in imparting "to the sensuous world the form of a system of rational beings." Only the form -- that is, the law -- can be so imparted, of course, since the objects of sense (phenomena) themselves cannot be altered to conform to their supersensuous counterparts. This would mean nothing but direct knowledge of things in themselves, which is impossible. So, accepting the existence of the interest under discussion, the fact is that it has to be grounded in (conditioned by) the law itself -- i.e. in reason -- since it is not an interest in the existence of sensuous objects, but of their form, insofar as that form has been imparted to sensuous objects from the supersensuous world of reason.

The Satisfaction of Rational Desire

Something needs to be said, though, about the nature of this interest, and its relationship to its peculiar form of delight. It must be noted that while our interest itself does not arise as a response to the (phenomenal) existence of the good, but as a response to the recognition of the universal law as such, our delight in the good is phenomenally caused. This point, easily overlooked due to the ambiguity of most of Kant's writings on the topic, will prove that even in the case of the moral good, he is here referring strictly to particular sensible examples as the source of delight, and hence is truly establishing a difference between the beautiful and the good without compromising his standard thoughts about the latter. The crux of Macmillan's criticism of Kant's use of the good here, is that our response to it is said to be unfree (as opposed to our response to the beautiful), whereas freedom is allegedly at the heart of Kant's ethics. The overcoming of inclination by the moral law is elsewhere said to be responded to with the one and only feeling which is grounded, not in sense experience, but in reason itself, namely respect.[13] This is what is felt at the thought of the moral law itself. It is, in effect, a noumenally caused feeling. Initially, we feel displeasure as reason thwarts our (phenomenally) natural impulses, but then a positive aspect of this same feeling arises, as at last

> ... one knows himself to be determined thereto solely by the law and without any interest; he becomes conscious of an altogether different interest which is subjectively produced by the law and which is purely practical and free. Our taking this interest in an action of duty is not suggested by an inclination, but the practical law absolutely commands it and also actually produces it. Consequently, it has a very special name, viz., respect.[14]

That this feeling of respect is felt at the supersensuous existence of the moral law itself is clearly and often stated.[15] But, although Kant's wording in this area sometimes becomes fuzzy, the delight we feel at the experience of the good is a response to phenomena. In the passage quoted above, Kant says that the feeling of respect -- the "subjectively produced" and "purely practical" interest -- is free. And yet, as we have seen, the feeling of esteem or approval, as described in the Third Critique, is unfree, and must be so, if the contrast with the delight in the beautiful is to be maintained. Respect is free because it is not itself determined by an interest in an object to be obtained through the judgment which gives rise to it, but by disinterested reason. But the moral action does have an object: itself. This is stated in the phrasing of the categorical imperative which is most relevant to us here: "Act according to maxims which can at the same time have themselves as universal laws of nature as their object."[16] In other words, do as any rational being

should do under any circumstances, not as this or that particular circumstance inclines you to act. Respect is free, then, because, unlike ordinary inclinations, it is not determined or conditioned by the prior phenomenal existence of its object. It is not, for example, the empirically conditioned awareness that telling the truth sometimes leads to pain, that determines how you will act (the object thus being the avoidance of pain). It is, rather, an interest inspired by an object of pure practical reason, and hence is grounded in the realm of freedom -- freedom from the mechanisic laws of motion to which we are bound when the sensuous past determines our current course of action. It is merely a conceit, a self-delusion, to believe -- in the age of modern physics -- that humans (insofar as we are sensuous beings) are somehow exempt from the laws of nature, and hence still morally responsible, i.e. free. A non-phenomenally determined interest seems the only solution. But respect, which is the means of our practical freedom, is, nevertheless, still an interest, i.e. a motive to act, and a determining ground, not of the proper course of action (which was determined prior to the arousal of any interest), but of the response to the experience of the representation of the existence of the object -- which, again, is not any sensible end of the action, but the sensible action itself. Delight in the good (i.e. esteem or approval) is unfree

because it is the satisfaction of an interest, in this case of a rational interest, i.e. what will cause this delight has been 'programmed into' sensibility, by respect directly, and by reason indirectly. Kant explicitly states that respect is the only rationally grounded feeling, i.e. the only one caused, in the first place, by a concept.[17] Esteem, therefore, is not so grounded -- its determinant is not the law as such, but that object in sensuous nature which satisfies the rationally grounded interest, i.e. like the delight in the agreeable, it is a response to the attainment of a desire. Our interests, including even that identified as respect, are all grounded in our sensuous nature (i.e. in ourselves as phenomena). The feeling of respect, that is, the interest in the good (the desire for its existence, according to Kant [Third Critique, section 4:46], is posterior to the issuing of reason's command to act in a certain way -- posterior, that is, to the recognition of the moral law. So the arousal of the moral interest presupposes the acknowledgment of the existence of the moral law as a principle of action. Otherwise, this interest would be an interest in the existence of the principle qua principle, and hence the choice of action would not be free. The "existence" in which, in respect, we have an interest, is the instantiation of the law in the world of experience. And the delight in the good is the

satisfaction of that desire. This is the manner whereby we can experience ourselves as free, without disturbing the laws of sensuous nature, which demand that we experience desires and their satisfaction as movers and responses to completed motion, respectively.

The good, though discovered through practical reason, pertains to the realm of action (and hence of experience). Free, i.e. rationally chosen, action is willed action. (If it were not willed by a rational agent, it would be entirely explicable by the causal laws of natural science.) And as Kant says at the conclusion of section 4 of the "Analytic of the Beautiful", "to will something, and to take a delight in its existence, i.e. to take an interest in it, are identical." [Third Critique, section 4:48] The representation of the object is disinterestedly judged to be good. Our delight results from the real existence of that which is represented, which implies that this delight is caused by the satisfaction of a desire that follows upon the judgment, since we cannot desire something that has not yet been identified. To put this simple analysis into more concrete terms: when encountered with a situation in which I must tell the truth or lie, I disinterestedly assess (through practical reason) the maxim "I should tell the truth". Finding it universalizable, I thus judge it to be in accordance with pure reason, and therefore good. The

recognition of the moral law causes the feeling of respect (for the law), and this feeling is identifiable with a desire (will) to obey the law -- that is, it is an interest in finding or producing a phenomenal (i.e. sensuous) instantiation of the law. The satisfaction of this desire causes the specific delight called esteem or approval.

And this is the answer to Macmillan's criticism, to the extent that interest really deserves to be treated as an issue -- albeit a secondary one -- in this context. The interest and delight in the good are not a problem for Kant's ethics, because neither one is a response to the moral good itself, i.e. to the law. Kant has not put himself in the self-contradictory position of saying that a disinterested judgment gives rise to, or 'brings with it', an interest in the existence of the object of the judgment itself -- that object being strictly a law of reason. Respect, understood as an interest, is a desire for a sensible instantiation of the object of the disinterested judgment, and approval a delight in the representation of such an instantiation. And thus, we also see the answer to Macmillan's criticisms of Kant's contrast of the good and the beautiful on the basis of interest. The contrast is not empty as long as we recall that what are being compared in the passage with which we began this inquiry are not the universalizable maxim and beautiful objects (both of which

are disinterstedly judged to be as they are), but feelings of delight caused by various types of sensuous experience. One delight (that in the good) presupposes a corresponding and determining desire, while the other does not. This at least implies a difference between the objects giving rise to these two types of delight, of which interest or the lack of it is merely a symptom. Macmillan, taking interest to be the fundamental issue of the argument, and ignoring the sensuous nature of the delight in the good, accuses Kant of compromising the core of his ethics to make this contrast substantial. In fact, as we shall see, it is precisely the fact that moral judgments -- like those of the beautiful -- are disinterested that makes the contrast weighty and necessary. To state the matter briefly -- it will be taken up in earnest shortly -- the basic difference between the two types of delight is that approval of the good is neither a judgment, nor even the subjective and sensuous result or accompaniment of one, whereas the simple pleasure in the beautiful is a judgment. Approval is merely the feeling resulting from the satisfaction of a specific type of sensuous desire.

A First Look at the Problem of Phenomenal Freedom

Before pursuing this last point -- for which all of the preceding discussion has been preparatory -- one all-

important matter must be addressed briefly, namely the precise manner whereby, to use Kant's terminology, the laws of the supersensuous world are imparted to the sensuous. We have thus far seen the two sides of the process -- the determination of the will by disinterested reason and the delight resulting from successful action in accordance with the moral law. The thornier question to ask, though, is how the imposing of noumenal rules on phenomena can take place without disturbing ordinary phenomenal causality. In other words, how can Kant avoid the modern moral problem as noted above, that of empirical freedom? How can we experience ourselves as free, given that we can only experience ourselves as phenomena? Whether Kant's attempted answer to these questions is satisfactory, is a topic for another day. But a clue to what he has in mind, and an example of how his doctrine of moral feeling is often ill-expressed, can be found in the Second Critique, where Kant responds to the claim that some sense or feeling is the ground of morality. The problem with this view, he claims, is that believing that a person will respond appropriately to his own actions, or those of another, presupposes an understanding and acceptance of the moral law.[18] But note the remainder of his argument:

> One must already value the importance of what we call duty, the respect for the moral law, and the immediate worth which a person obtains in his own

> eyes through obedience to it, in order to feel satisfaction in the consciousness of his conformity to law....[19]

The relation of respect to this unnamed "satisfaction" is the same here as in the "Analytic of the Beautiful". Then, however, he writes this:

> [T]his satisfaction... cannot be felt prior to the knowledge of obligation, nor can it be made the basis of the latter.... [A]s the human will by virtue of its freedom is directly determined by the moral law, I am far from denying that frequent practice in accordance with this determining ground can itself finally cause a subjective feeling of satisfaction. Indeed, it is a duty to establish and cultivate this feeling, which alone deserves to be called the moral feeling. But the concept of duty cannot be derived from it, for we would have to presuppose a feeling for law as such and regard as an object of sensation what can only be thought by reason.[20]

The phenomenal experience of ourselves as moral agents (of our action as "an object of sensation") produces a feeling of satisfaction -- a satisfaction which presupposes "the knowledge of obligation", and, of course, the respect for the moral law. He does not here identify it other than by the generic term "satisfaction", but given that it is a response to our having acted in accordance with the good -- that is, a response to an instantiation of the moral law -- he can only be referring to approval, the specific satisfaction associated with the phenomenal experience of the good. Further evidence that approval is the satisfaction in question is that it is referred to as "the

moral feeling". In itself, this might seem odd or anomalous, given that this is the title ordinarily bestowed upon respect. Still, this ambiguity, though unfortunate, is a reminder that purposiveness is of the essence of rational willing. Respect is a form of interest. Interest implies a goal. In a very traditional way, Kant is accepting the teleological notion that the end of an action is implied in or as its cause -- remembering that 'cause', here, means not the determining ground of the will, which is reason, but the incentive to act, which is interest. The moral feeling, then, is directed towards the same object -- the moral law -- whether (to use the traditional language) that object is viewed as phenomenally potential (meaning, in this case, noumenally actual), or phenomenally actual. So, though confusing, it is not simply sloppy of Kant to refer to both respect (desire) and approval or esteem (satisfaction) as the "moral feeling", keeping in mind that feeling is, with one exception, always a response to the existence of an object -- in this case either to the object's existence in reason (respect), or to its existence for sense (approval). Given that this unnamed "satisfaction" is called the moral feeling in the work in which respect is discussed in the greatest detail, it seems impossible to explain this ambiguity in any other way. In other words, it is inexplicable how Kant could have meant anything but approval

here.

The main difficulty with this reading lies in Kant's suggestion that we have a duty to "establish and cultivate this feeling". The problem is that this claim seems inconsistent with the view of approval as the necessary (i.e. unfree) response to the representation of the sensuous instantiation of the good (and particularly the moral good). Even if Kant were speaking of respect -- the moral feeling proper -- which the above quotation makes it clear he is not, the notion of opting to experience it would be unthinkable, since it is defined as a necessary response to the thwarting of natural inclinations by reason. And yet, it seems as though Kant is saying that we have to choose whether or not we will avail ourselves of this satisfaction -- a choice which is posterior to the recognition of our obligation to act morally, and to the accompanying feeling of respect. Having shown, though, that approval is the only reasonable contender for the title of moral feeling (other than respect itself, and only because of its relationship to the latter), I believe we are entitled to dig through the wording of this statement in search of consistency, rather than assuming it to be damning evidence against my interpretation.

To begin with, Kant's main concern, in the passage under examination, is not to offer his theory of moral

feeling, but to refute those previous theories which treat moral feeling as the determining ground of moral action. His mention of his own thoughts on the subject here is little more than an aside, which, presumably, is why he does not even bother to name the feeling specifically. Furthermore, since he is only concerned here with the determining grounds of moral action, it is understandable that he would only discuss this feeling as a response to one's own conduct. In this context, it is only the relationship between any such feeling (assuming it exists at all) and our own actions that matters. Nothing he says here precludes the possibility of this feeling being a response to other people's actions as well, as approval is elsewhere said to be. He simply considers an exhaustive discussion of this feeling to be unnecessary at this stage of the Critique. Aside from its dependence on respect for the law, he makes only two claims about it here: (1) we have a duty to establish and cultivate it, and (2) it is a response to "an object of sensation". We have already seen how the second of these is true of approval -- it is the delight felt at the representation of the phenomenal existence of a particular instantiation of the moral law. I note that this satisfaction is a response to an object of sensation in order to emphasize that when Kant remarks that this false theory of moral feeling would "regard as an object of

sensation what can only be thought by reason", he means objective and not subjective sensation. Objective sensation is Kant's term for what we might call 'sense experience' -- it refers to the representation of external existents by the mind. Subjective sensation is what we (and Kant) would ordinarily call 'feeling'. It is not any kind of representation, but merely a response to one. [Third Critique, section 3:45] His criticism is that this theory would presume the existence of a "feeling for law" (emphasis added), which means that it is the item to which this satisfaction is a response, and not the feeling itself, that is being falsely regarded as the moral law. The law, according to this view, would be a sensible object, a phenomenon, with a relationship to feeling analogous to the true law's relationship to reason. This would make it unfree, and thus 'moral' in name only, since the laws derived from sensuous nature are laws of unfreedom. As Kant says of this implication of the theory in question:

> If this did not end up in the flattest contradiction, it would destroy every concept of duty and fill its place with a merely mechanical play of refined inclinations, sometimes contending with the coarser.[21]

In other words, either (1) sensuous feeling would be held to be the determining ground of the very thing which determines it, insofar as satisfaction is caused by objects of sensation -- this would be the "flattest contradiction"

referred to above -- or (2) we would have to presuppose that this feeling of satisfaction itself is indeed only the response to the law, but that all this really means is that it is the response to the existence of an object of inclination (albeit of a "refined" inclination). In this case the inclination would be the ground of the law, and this is what would "destroy every concept of duty", since it would make moral action merely a phenomenally determined, i.e. unfree, motion, essentially like any other motion obeying the causal mechanisms of nature.

That the true moral feeling -- as described in the above passage from the Second Critique -- is a satisfaction, is not disputed. Nor does Kant question the idea that this satisfaction is a response to phenomena. His only argument against the theory under examination is that this satisfaction cannot be the determining ground of the moral law.

It is nevertheless the first of Kant's two claims about this satisfaction -- that we have a duty to establish and cultivate it -- that might be seen as presenting the bigger problem for my view that he is here referring to approval as the moral feeling. Approval is a determined response -- that is, given that the judgment on the action has 'brought with it' a respect for the law it exemplifies, and thus an interest of the will to act according to the law, such

action must be esteemed or approved of. In what sense can it be established and cultivated? The answer lies in Kant's wording of this statement. The establishment and cultivation of this feeling is a "duty". Given that we are dealing with the realm of moral action, and that Kant is clearly speaking of self-legislation here, and not any externally imposed obligation, this "duty" is a strictly moral duty -- a duty in the proper Kantian sense. But our moral duty is to obey the dictates of pure practical reason, i.e. the moral law. The ambiguity of the wording of this passage is apparently the result of Kant's decision to speak somewhat eliptically of the moral feeling here, and to defer a fuller discussion until later. The duty to which he refers, is the duty to obey the moral law, which necessarily results in the 'establishment' of this satisfaction -- a feeling which can be experienced by no other means. A duty to establish a feeling which is exclusively the response to moral action, is the duty to act morally. Otherwise, moral action -- the only way to "establish" this delight -- would have to be regarded as the means to some end (the establishment of a feeling) rather than as an end in itself. In other words, their would be a moral action -- namely, the act of establishing the feeling of satisfaction in moral action -- which contained another moral action (the action which actually established this feeling) within it, as a

means. The latter action would thus not really be moral in the sense of being good 'in itself' or 'absolutely'. Kant's claim that we are duty-bound to cause this satisfaction must, therefore, be read merely as the claim that we have a duty to act dutifully, and that such action will result in this peculiar type of satisfaction. The first part of this claim is either a tautology, or a phrasing of the categorical imperative which implicitly assumes Kant's definition of duty. In any event, it avoids the implication that this delight is the reason we act morally. We act out of duty, and such action necessarily causes approval. The delight is the subjective and sensuous evidence of our having acted morally -- that is, of our freedom. As such, it has to be posterior to the determination of the will to act.

The final, and most important, difficulty arises with the notion of 'cultivation'. The solution of this problem, however, will answer the question of how the moral delight is able to be rationally determined, and yet empirically explicable within natural science.

The feeling of approval must be preceded by a rational judgment and the free determination of an interest. Approval itself is, once again, a rationally conditioned response to phenomena, as opposed to one conditioned by previous sense experience. Kant, having noted that the

moral law determines the will, says -- as we saw above -- that "frequent practice in accordance with this determining ground can itself finally cause a subjective feeling of satisfaction."[22] He does not say that only such "frequent practice" can cause this feeling. The feeling -- if I am correctly identifying it -- is, strictly speaking, caused by the satisfaction of a rationally established interest. On its face, the word "finally" suggests a contradiction of the claim that such satisfaction evokes a necessary, determined response. But the idea here seems to be that -- remembering that approval is a response to phenomena -- if faced with the same morally exemplary phenomena often enough, we will "finally" begin to respond to it in the appropriate way automatically, as it were.[23] Moral action never ceases to be motivated by rational desire, but its instantiation, if repeated habitually, begins to be responded to habitually. That is, the process of judgment no longer needs to be explicitly undertaken each time the moral action is performed (i.e. experienced), in order to cause the moral feeling (understood, as it is in this context, as a response to a sensuous object). All we will need to be able to do, eventually, is to identify the action as, for example, truth-telling, in order to feel the delight in its existence. The original judgment of this type of action (the judgment of its accordance with moral law) remains

implied in each occurence of the satisfaction, which is to say that the feeling itself never actually becomes the ground determining how we ought to act. But, once cultivated, it is experienced phenomenally as though it were such a ground. The feeling, along with the process through which it becomes 'automatized', thus comes to have the appearance of accordance with mechanistic natural law, although, looked at from the critical philosopher's standpoint, it is seen to have been noumenally determined. The desire, the choice to act in accordance with that desire, the action itself, and the feeling of satisfaction at the attainment of the object of the desire, are all objects of experience, i.e. phenomena. The part of the process that is not phenomenal is the law of action itself, which is of supersensuous origin, and hence cannot be accounted for by the laws of sensuous nature. By making a 'habit' of moral action, and of its attendant delight, the rational agent operates entirely within the sensuous world. Its satisfaction does not require the continued mediation of an actual moral judgment, and yet it remains entirely dependent on the implicit judgment for its very existence as a satisfaction. This means that, although the philosopher at least has an ironical view of all this, knowing as he does that there is an unconditioned determinant of 'moral phenomena', even he can directly experience only the

conditioned phenomena. The unconditioned determining ground never throws a wrench in nature's works. To the extent that our rational agency is phenomenally knowable, it (essentially for that very reason) appears to -- and does -- obey natural law. Noumenal causality can only be known indirectly, through the apparent (i.e. phenomenal) disinterestedness of the principle of action which we desire to effect upon our surroundings. We experience our freedom phenomenally, then, although what we are experiencing is by definition an escape from phenomenal causality.[24] Having 'cultivated' the moral feeling, we appear to be acting in a perfectly natural way. We act as we desire; we experience the delight of having attained the sensuous object of our desire; we continue to act in this way because it brings us delight. The last stage of this might at first appear un-Kantian, but we must recall that the desire itself -- and hence the delight peculiar to its satisfaction -- was originally determined by reason. We would not have experienced this delight in the first place -- and thereby been 'conditioned' to seek it again -- had not reason at some point determined us to act in the specific way that would result in this delight.[25] There should be no concern here that once 'cultivated' in this way, approval will arise in response to actions which only accidentally -- rather than by rational choice -- happen to conform to the moral

law. Remember that this delight is by definition a feeling caused by the experience of moral action. It is the response to the satisfaction of an interest in acting morally. Having determined that telling the truth is moral, I then desire to do so. Having thus acted morally, I approve of my own actions, and this delight reinforces my desire to act morally again in the future. The goal of moral action is to have acted morally. The attainment of this goal is the satisfaction in question. So the moral character of this behaviour is never lost as a result of cultivating its attendant delight. I am not cultivating the desire to perform the physical motions defined as truth-telling; I am cultivating the desire to act morally, to which end these physical motions are a means. By way of contrast: a mass murderer might tell the truth about the location of the bodies of his victims, because he has been offered a cash reward for doing so. This action might indeed cause him to experience a delight, but the delight will not be approval, because he was merely desiring to tell the truth, not to obey the moral law. This would be a case of acting 'legally' -- i.e. in a way that coincides with the law -- but not morally, which requires a decision to act according to the law simply because it is the law. In other words, approval is the specific response to the satisfaction of the one and only 'disinterested interest' (i.e. the

desire to obey the law for its own sake). As such, its cultivation does not entail any possibility of 'losing sight of' its original cause -- its cause being its determining interest, which is a desire to act morally. Nothing else can cause it. The truth-telling mass murderer feels gratification (the response to the satisfaction of an inclination). And this is part of the significance of Kant's claim, in the "Analytic of the Beautiful", that the three kinds of delight, in the agreeable, beautiful, and good, are

> ... related to inclination, to favour, or to respect. For FAVOUR is the only free liking. An object of inclination, and one which a law of reason imposes upon our desire, leaves us no freedom to turn anything into an object of pleasure. All interest presupposes a want, or calls one forth; and, being a ground determining approval, deprives the judgment on the object of its freedom. [*Third Critique*, section 5:49]

To begin with the first claim made here, the analogy drawn among these three types of "liking" is really only properly applicable to the relationship between inclination and respect. Favour is differentiated by its freedom. Given that respect itself is also free, the distinction of favour on the basis of its freedom is obviously intended to mean that it does not determine the object of its own satisfaction. In other words, it is fundamentally different from the other two, in that it is not a desire (all desires being for some specific thing).

The relationship between respect and inclination is more than an analogy in any loose sense of that word. It provides the explanation of how, in practice (i.e. phenomenally) we can be free and natural simultaneously. Respect is to approval or esteem as inclination is to gratification. The former pair is conditioned by reason, the latter by sense. But each pair consists of a sensuous desire and its satisfaction. Insofar as it exists within the spatio-temporal realm, our freedom operates in exactly the same way as every other aspect of our sensible existence: it obeys deterministic laws. Given Kant's belief that we can only know the spatio-temporal realm, freedom could not possibly be experienced in any other way. In other words, once the feeling of approval has been cultivated (or habituated), our actual freedom is experienced entirely as a delight -- not that approval itself is free, but rather that we recognize ourselves as free by feeling approval. Once again, it should be emphasized that this does not mean that Kant is claiming that we can eventually make approval the ground of morality, since the existence of approval depends entirely on the satisfaction of an interest which, in turn, derives exclusively from disinterested judgments of practical reason. The cultivation of approval, though, results in its appearance as a ground of morality, and as an apparent

motive to act. In other words, experienced phenomenally, respect and approval are merely particular forms of inclination and gratification, although their actual determining ground is not sense, as it appears to be, but reason. The supersensuous moral law cannot be experienced sensuously. Far from being an insoluble problem for ethics, Kant claims that this holds the answer to the problem of ethics in the age of modern science. That aspect of morality which does not conform to the causal laws of spatio-temporal nature, is not spatio-temporal, and hence does not obstruct those laws. The aspect of morality that is spatio-temporal -- namely, moral action itself -- conforms entirely to such causal laws. One might be tempted to say that it conforms in appearance only, as though the noumenal self (or Kant, at least) were playing some sort of trick on theoretical reason. But the fact is that the phenomenal realm, in which these mechanistic laws are valid, is only appearance.

Looked at from the point of view of theoretical reason, then, moral action really does operate naturally -- or, to change the emphasis in such a way as to hint at Kant's achievement in ethics, moral action does operate naturally. Theoretical reason, though, has its limits, and practical reason is able to give us a perspective on moral action that is different from that of its counterpart. The limitation

of theoretical by practical reason allows both perspectives to be perfectly correct, within their own spheres. Practical reason is the means by which we impose the laws of supersensuous nature on the world of sense, but once this has been done, the result is necessarily sensuous, and as such, it is beyond what practical reason explains, or needs to explain.[26] Looked at from the point of view of practical reason, however, the imposition of laws from without is -- precisely because the laws are from without -- like the production of an artificial nature. The production of this artificial nature is caused by an equally artificial (i.e. not naturally conditioned) desire. Coming in contact with this artificial part of the sensuous world produces a real (i.e. phenomenal) feeling of delight, but it is a delight caused exclusively by the experience of the artificial. For "artificial", in this depiction, we could just as easily and accurately substitute the words "free", "supersensuous", or "noumenal". The notion of artificiality, though, seems to capture the essence of Kant's answer to the question of how, exactly, we put things into the world through moral legislation in such a way that our actions are truly moral and available for experience.

The question -- it is really Kant's own -- of how or whether moral action, once it has been performed (i.e. made phenomenal) can be unquestionably regarded as purely moral,

does not concern us here. In other words, for our purposes at this point it is of no consequence whether this artificial nature, insofar as it exists and conforms to its natural laws, can actually be experienced as completely free. After all, as phenomena, respect and approval must be experienced as though they are inclination and gratification, since, as phenomena, we always act on the basis of inclination. These feelings are needed to explain how the supersensuous and sensuous worlds are brought together, but once this has been achieved, our experience of the newly constituted sensuous nature must continue to conform to the rules of the 'original' one. That is, understood as the link between the realm of freedom and that of time and space, these feelings are peculiar in nature. But, understood as the way we experience our moral freedom, they must -- as elements of experience -- appear to obey mechanistic laws. In other words, there is some doubt as to whether we can ever fully experience ourselves as moral beings at all.

This issue of the real possibility of the experience of freedom can and must be left until Chapter 3. What matters at this stage is that, for Kant, in order to be free, this is what we have to do. In this context, we only need to understand his profound philosophical reasons for establishing such an ethical theory -- namely, his need to

overcome the apparently insoluble problem of human freedom in a completely deterministic natural world.

1. Kant, Immanuel, The Critique of Judgement (James Creed Meredith, translator), London: Oxford University Press, 1952. [hereafter cited in the text as 3rd Critique, and noted as 3rd Critique, section (#):(#), page number in this translation]

2. Macmillan, R.A.C., The Crowning Phase of the Critical Philosophy, London: Macmillan and Co., 1912, p. 72.

3. Macmillan, pp. 72-73.

4. Ibid., p. 72.

5. Macmillan, p. 72.

6. Ibid., p. 72.

7. Ibid., p. 73.

8. Beck, Lewis White, A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 134.

9. Kant, Immanuel, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (Lewis White Beck, translator), Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1959, 437 [p. 55-6].

10. Zammito, John, The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 265.

11. No time need be spent, in this context, on Kant's theory of space and time, other than to note that his view that they are merely our modifications of the non-spatio-temporal noumena gives an added dimension to his view of moral freedom. In obeying the moral law, we are forcing our experience to conform to noumenal rules, which means that what we experience (in such instances) is, in effect, a spatio-temporal approximation of the noumena. It is as close as we can come to experiencing the noumena directly.

12. Kant, Immanuel, Critique of Practical Reason (Lewis White Beck, translator), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949, v, 43 [p. 153-4]

13. Kant, Immanuel, Critique of Practical Reason (Lewis White Beck, translator), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949, p. 187.

14. Critique of Practical Reason, v, 81 [p. 188]

15. See, for example, Critique of Practical Reason, iv [403, p. 62n], and v, 81 [p. 188].

16. Kant, Foundations, 437 [p. 55-6]

17. Guyer, Paul, Kant and the experience of freedom, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 361.

18. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, v, 38 [150].

19. Ibid., v, 38 [p. 150]

20. Ibid., v, 38 [p. 150].

21. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, v, 38 [p. 150].

22. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, v, 38 [p. 150].

23. The implications of this notion of responding to habituated moral action for education, are interesting. It seems that, for a child not yet able to understand the grounding of the moral law, the 'cultivation' of the delight appropriate to the experience of such actions will serve to establish the disposition to act morally. In other words, the child will learn to like telling the truth before he fully realizes why it is to be esteemed, more or less the way he is fed spinach at a very young age, in order that he will be disposed to appreciate it fully once he realizes why it is good for him. There is some question as to how one could be trained to experience a pleasure in the thwarting of one's natural inclinations, prior to understanding why such a thwarting is beneficial, but this training must be of the essence of Kant's theory of moral education. This problem is not as prominent for, say, Aristotle's view of the role of habit, the reason being that for him, the inclination to happiness is essentially in line -- at least in principle -- with moral action. It is the desire for happiness, in that case, which causes us to seek the good action. In Kant's case, given that the feeling of approval is by definition the response to an instantiation of the moral law -- which must, at some point prior to the delight, have been explicitly thought, in order to cause the supersensuously grounded interest to which approval corresponds -- it is questionable to suggest that we can ever experience it before having actually performed an act of disinterested judgment.

24. Experiencing our freedom phenomenally means that what we actually experience is noumenal causality, causality itself being only a concept of theoretical reason used to connect phenomena into what can properly be called experiences. [Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, v, 49, p. 159] In effect, then, freedom to cause, which is what we are trying to achieve, is phenomenal freedom. But, as grounded in pure practical reason, the laws of phenomenal freedom point us towards a directly unknowable noumenal freedom which is, like noumena in general, a necessary assumption as a ground for the freedom we experience. Freedom is the one arena of experience which is tied to the noumenal realm in a way that can be understood -- i.e. the relation can be known, although one half of it is not within the world of possible experience.

25. This does not make the establishment of this delight, and hence of future moral action, dependent on the 'success' of the first action of this kind. Success and failure are not terms that enter into this matter at all, since the action -- insofar as it is moral -- is not directed towards any phenomenal result. If my telling the truth turns out to result in injury to myself or someone else, this does not prevent my feeling approval at having done so. If it does, then I am being conditioned to act, not by reason, but by a desire

for sensuous objects, i.e. by inclination. Simply telling the truth will cause approval, assuming I am doing it out of a sense of duty, i.e. out of respect for the moral law. In other words, what the experience of delight depends on is the motive of the action -- specifically that the motive be a rationally determined interest -- and not the outcome. [Perhaps, to refer back to the problem raised in note 23, above, Kant would thus be forced to claim that a child's moral action -- which must, if there is such a thing as moral education, result in approval -- is rationally determined by someone else's reason. Then the question would arise as to whether we can feel the delight appropriate to the satisfaction of someone else's interest, simply because they have told us that we ought to have the same interest.]

26. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, v, 49 [p. 159].

Chapter Two

FREEDOM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Setting the Criteria for a Free Experience

As has been shown, and it is what is of primary concern for us here, Kant has effected a radical break from the philosophical tradition in at least one salient respect. The need to establish a moral theory that is fundamentally independent of theoretical reason -- i.e. reason understood in the traditional way -- leads Kant to a split (necessary for the possibility of freedom) between nature and freedom, which means between ethics and metaphysics. This, ultimately, means that the good and the true (i.e. nature) are not complementary to one another, but antithetical. If nature were completely inescapable, freedom would be unthinkable. And yet nature is what is, for humans. Only to the extent, then, that we can produce an artificial nature for ourselves to experience, can we be free. In effect, our experience of freedom lies in our awareness of the artificiality of this product. More precisely, it lies in the feeling inspired by this artificiality -- approval. That which ultimately explains the existence of this experience is the non-spatio-temporal moral law. Something of a noumenal nature is experienced, not directly of course,

but by way of the approximation of its form in the sensible world. If this does not happen -- or to the extent that it does not happen -- we are not free.

Thus freedom, for Kant, is a matter of escaping from the world of sense, but is experienced as a response to sensuous objects. In other words, actually experiencing freedom requires the sensuous instantiation of those objects which are the means of our autonomy: the laws of moral action. We experience freedom as a desire and its satisfaction, i.e. as analogous to our experience of unfreedom. The desire to act according to the moral law is thus the desire to observe ourselves as responsible agents. The desire is free (determined by reason), and its satisfaction is the delight at having experienced our ability to act according to a freely made choice. This is why the delight itself is felt only towards human action, either our own or someone else's. In the Second Critique, Kant says, in reference to the interest in the good:

> The only object of respect is the law, and indeed only the law which we impose on ourselves and yet recognize as necessary in itself. As a law we are subject to it without consulting self-love; as imposed on us by ourselves, it is consequence of our will. In the former respect it is analogous to fear and in the latter to inclination. All respect for a person is only respect for the law... of which the person provides an example.[1]

In other words, all respect for a person is a desire (remember Kant's definition of respect) to act as that

person does, because his actions are good. And this implies that we can do so. Our delight, in this case, is that of seeing the law instantiated. We cannot experience freedom directly, then, because any such experience is phenomenal, meaning tied to natural mechanism, and hence demands correspondence to an a priori principle of a noumenal origin. So what Kant refers to as the 'moral feeling' in the sense of being a response to examples of morality -- namely, approval -- is, so to speak, the feeling of freedom. It is not, however, a free feeling, as we have seen, and this is why doubts arise as to whether it is possible to experience ourselves as moral (i.e. free) beings at all.

Still, what is essential is (a) the establishment of a theory of freedom which requires some form of exemption from the laws of nature, and (b) the requirement that in order for an item in phenomenal experience to be judged as morally good, it must be explicable according to a concept -- we must be able to say what the item exemplifies, and that what it exemplifies is a moral law. So, (a) demands a separation of the good and the true, and (b) requires a reference to purpose, since assessing something as good on the basis of its concept means identifying it by way of its goal. The problem with this theory, as we have seen, is that practical freedom must, it seems, be experienced as inclination and gratification, or it cannot be experienced at all. What

this means, is that the experience depends on the phenomenal existence of its object. Our interest in its existence is our desire to act freely (i.e. to obey the moral law), while our delight in having attained or found its existence is our feeling of having acted, or perhaps (in the case of seeing others obey the law) of being capable of acting, freely -- that is, of actually being free.

It is the fact that feelings are essential to the way we experience the world that holds the key to understanding the heart of the contrast between the good and the beautiful. Since approval is a response to the satisfaction of a desire for the existence of something, it is, of course, dependent upon the existence of that thing for sense, in order to exist as a feeling. As we have seen, it is precisely the existence of the object that meets with approval -- either as the goal determined after an explicit process of judgment, or (apparently) immediately, as a result of the cultivation of the feeling through repeated action in accordance with rational interest (respect). The feeling for the beautiful which corresponds to respect, however, is not a desire, but something closer to a disposition. This means that the delight with which it is aligned is not a satisfaction, in the strict sense of being something we <u>wanted</u>. This, in fact, is how it is differentiated from both approval <u>and</u> gratification. If

there is no desire of which it is the satisfaction, then the existence of its cause is not of concern to us, at least insofar as we are judging it to be beautiful.

As we have seen, a rational desire is intrinsically bound to a concept, specifically to the moral law. A mere natural inclination, on the other hand, is the result of an immediately agreeable sense experience having conditioned us to seek the experience again. As Kant explains,

> Now, that a judgement on an object by which its agreeableness is affirmed, expresses an interest in it, is evident from the fact that through [subjective] sensation it provokes a desire for similar objects, consequently the delight presupposes, not the simple judgement about it, but the bearing its real existence has upon my state so far as affected by such an Object. [Third Critique, section 3:45]

Here, we see that if a judgment is essentially identifiable with an interest in the existence of the object of judgment -- it "expresses an interest in it" -- then the delight we experience when confronted with a sensible object of that type is not free. The reason for this is that to be conditioned or determined by a desire (of any kind) is to be part of the natural mechanism of the phenomenal world. Freedom ultimately means freedom from the world in which we are moved by desires. In the case of inclination, this means that there is no element of freedom whatsoever. In the case of the good, it means that the moral judgment, which explicitly thwarts desire, is free, but that our

practical freedom is experienced unfreely (as a desired consequence). The difference between the interest in the agreeable and that in the good, then, is that the former is a desire for the sensuous existence of the object of judgment itself, which implies that that object is of a sensuous nature. The interest in the good, on the other hand, is, as we have seen, a desire for a sensuous instantiation of the non-sensuous object of judgment, not a desire for the existence of the object of judgment itself. We have seen how this latter fact begets problems for the possibility of actually experiencing our actions as free. The only complete solution to the difficulty of experiencing our freedom directly would be to experience a phenomenal object which -- as phenomenon -- caused a subjective response which was not determined by an interest, i.e. which was independent of desire but which was still caused by sensuous objects. In other words, it would have to be a feeling which was in no necessary way tied to the existence of the object which caused it. And yet, as caused by phenomena, how could it be experienced as a delight in the existence of neither an instantiation of a universal (the good) nor a sensible object of judgment (the agreeable)? The only answer, it seems, is that this delight would have to be felt in response to (1) an object of judgment itself, and (2) an object which we have in no way been conditioned

to like. Given the sensuous nature of feeling itself, (1) is possible only if the object of judgment is sensible, and (2) is possible only if nothing in our sensuous nature or experience has prepared us for, or inclined us towards, the object. (1) is necessary in order that that which is being disinterestedly (i.e. freely) judged is actually that which we are experiencing. (2) is necessary in order that at least an initial disinterestedness be possible, remembering that we are dealing with a sensible object, and hence one that will affect the faculty of desire after judgment has been passed, even if no desire preceeds the judgment. If (1) were not the case, then the delight in question would be approval. If (2) were not the case, then the delight would be gratification.

Macmillan's final criticism of Kant's contrast of the beautiful and the good on the basis of interest is, as cited on page 8, that the fact that an interest follows our judgment of the good is a vacuous distinction, since "it is eminently true of the Beautiful also that an interest follows our judgment." As we have already seen, his error lies in mistaking a comparison of delights for a comparison of objects of judgment. The fruit of that error can now be seen in full. The interest following the moral judgment is not an interest in the existence of the object of judgment, which would be impossible due to the supersensuous nature of

that object. The interest following the aesthetic judgment -- its precise nature need not be discussed in this context -- is an interest in the existence of the object of judgment itself, entirely possible due to the object's sensuous nature. This latter interest is the kind that Macmillan takes Kant to be ascribing to moral judgment. This would, were it an accurate interpretation, have put Kant in the position of claiming that we can desire that which is to be judged disinterestedly, which is obviously problematic.

The Singularity of Beauty

The question now, is how can Kant be making a claim about the beautiful which we have shown would be self-contradictory, were he to make it regarding the good? The difference -- the real issue at stake in the passage that Macmillan presumes to be merely about interest -- is that the good (the object of moral judgment) is a universal principle of action, whereas the beautiful (the object of aesthetic judgment) is particular, or more accurately, singular. [Third Critique, section 8:55] If I desire the existence of a moral principle as a principle, then when I act according to this principle, I am not merely doing as a rationally grounded desire demands, but acting according to a principle that I want to have as the principle determining

my action. In other words, not only would it be problematic, in this case, to experience the phenomenal results of willed action as free, but even the purely free (i.e. rational) status of the act of determining my will prior to action would be compromised. Such a desire, if this were what Kant had meant by moral judgment bringing an interest with it, would have cut out the heart of the Kantian theory of autonomy: the free determination of the will by a disinterested judgment, meaning the lack of any personal interest informing that determination. If, for example, I desire that truth-telling be what I ought to do, then -- even though it really is a moral action -- the desire to actually tell the truth (the desire to instantiate the law, i.e. respect) does not have a purely rational ground. In effect, making the object of pure moral judgment an object of interest runs into Kant's own criticism of the notion of a "feeling for law", as explained above. It would make an object of sensation -- that is, an external existent -- out of something which can only be thought by reason.

So, how is it possible for the judgment of the beautiful to 'bring with it' an interest in -- i.e. a desire for the existence of -- its own object, without this leading to the same complication as it would lead to in the case of the good? The answer, as suggested, lies in the singularity of the object being judged as beautiful. If I judge a

sensible object to be beautiful, and consequently desire its existence, then at least the initial encounter with this object, with its ensuing judgment, was not determined by a desire -- if it had been, then the object would not have been judged as beautiful, but agreeable. In other words, the initial judgment of such an object, assuming it exists, is entirely free. Nothing in this sequence of events mitigates or compromises the freedom of the initial experience. And it is freedom in experience that is our concern here. The delight in the sensible example of the good must be determined by a desire which is itself determined by the supersensuous. Otherwise, even such an attenuated or filtered phenomenal experience of freedom would be impossible. This is the ultimate reason why there can be no interest in the object of moral judgment -- that is, the law -- itself. In the case of the object judged to be beautiful, on the other hand, the judgment itself involves sensuous experience, so that, assuming it is free (i.e. disinterested) in the first place, this judgment giving rise to a desire for the existence of its proper object entails no compromise of the possibility of experiencing freedom directly. Desires are directed toward sensuous objects. The good, as a universal, cannot be an object of desire, although a sensuous approximation of it can be. Since the beautiful is itself a sensuous object,

and one which gives us pleasure, it will arouse a desire for its own existence. But the disinterested ground of the initial experience is not thereby called into question.

One might become concerned, at this point, about the experience and judgment of the beautiful becoming interested after this initial encounter. Here is where the notion of singularity comes into play. If, for example, I judge the taste of an apple to be agreeable, then I am implicitly judging every other apple, or similar-tasting sensible object, to be agreeable, such that I can say, prior to tasting (i.e. experiencing) some other object, that I like it 'in principle', so to speak. My judgment of this new object, then, is conditioned by previous experience with another similar object. In other words, I am inclined towards it, and hence, of course, my judgment cannot be disinterested. If, on the other hand, the object is by nature unique, then our judgment of it implies no judgment of any other object. In other words, when I hear Mozart's "Clarinet Concerto", and judge it to be beautiful, I am not implicitly saying: "All such sounds are beautiful", such that some future sound will be judged to be beautiful in a way that was conditioned by the previous judgment. This, of course, would prevent <u>other</u> sensible objects from being judged freely, which would mean either that these other objects could not be judged to be beautiful, but merely

agreeable, or that the judgment of the beautiful is not (or at least does not have to be) free. The former conclusion would imply -- since only the first of the similar items to be judged, in this case the "Clarinet Concerto", can be called beautiful -- that being beautiful is simply a matter of chance, that is, of having been the first example of a specific 'category' to catch my attention. The other sounds are ruled out as beautiful -- and relegated to the status of the merely agreeable -- simply because they were not the first one I heard. The latter conclusion to be drawn from the view that the judgment of beauty implies a judgment of all similar objects -- namely that the judgment of the beautiful *does not* have to be free at all -- would leave us no grounds for distinguishing beautiful objects from the merely agreeable. This is because both kinds of judgment -- or all of one kind and at least most of the other -- would then be based on a desire for the existence of the sensible object of judgment. Hence, the term 'beauty' would be essentially incoherent, if not simply vacuous.

If the beautiful is to be meaningfully differentiated, then, the judgment of it must not admit of any implied judgments about other objects of experience. To put it another way, when I hear that Mozart concerto, it is, as it were, <u>logically</u> correct to say "All such sounds are beautiful". Insofar as it is an object of aesthetic

judgment, however, the fact is that there is only one such object, namely the concerto itself.

This last point is significant, because, in fact, Kant does admit that we can generalize a judgment of taste (i.e. of beauty) in a logical manner. In the case of natural beauty, this is a meaningful act:

> The understanding can, from the comparison of the Object, in point of delight, with the judgements of others, form a universal judgement, e.g. 'All tulips are beautiful'. But that judgement is then not one of taste, but is a logical judgement which converts the reference of an object to our taste into a predicate belonging to things of a certain kind. [Third Critique, section 33:140]

In other words, if we can subsume many similar beautiful objects under a concept of the understanding, then we can make a categorical statement about the beauty of such objects in general. This is not, however, the same as saying that a singular judgment of the beautiful is -- as a judgment producing an interest -- generalizable. If this were the case, then, as we have seen, no future object of sensation belonging to this category could be described as beautiful, the reason being that the entailed generalized interest in objects of this kind precludes any further disinterestedness in judging such objects. A non-aesthetic, merely logical generalization, as in Kant's example of 'all tulips', is not similarly problematic, because it is not in any direct way related to feeling, i.e. to experience. It

is precisely because the judgment of the beautiful involves a delight, that it produces a desire for the existence of the object so judged. A mere logical judgment, to put it simply, is not a source of delight, and hence produces no interest. It does not determine the will in any way, but is only, so to speak, a statement of fact. The logical judgment 'All tulips are beautiful', is no more likely to arouse in us a desire for individual tulips, than the equation '2 + 2 = 4' is likely to arouse a desire for pairs of twos. Thus, by not affecting the will in any way, this type of generalization leaves the freedom (i.e. disinterestedness) of each new aesthetic judgment intact, regardless of any similarity between the objects of these singular judgments.

Zammito gives a concise synopsis of this contrast between judgments of the beautiful and those of the agreeable. Referring to the passage from the Third Critique quoted earlier (p. 39), regarding the nature of the judgment of the agreeable, he writes:

> Note that the language implies a very important generalization. The judgment, "X is agreeable," changes into "X's are agreeable." But this promotion from singularity to generality does not occur, according to Kant, with the beautiful. The initial judgment of sense is "aesthetical and singular" in a manner analogous to the judgment of taste, but the subsequent generalization is not.[2]

The Free Delight and the Free Judgment

We had been delineating (what would have to be) the precise nature of a direct experience of freedom, rather than the problematic one associated with moral action. We had determined that it would have to be an experience of delight in a sensible object of judgment, which nevertheless could be judged disinterestedly. That is, it would have to be the subjective sensation of an object which can be judged as freely as a principle of moral action, while being as grounded in sense experience as is the judgment of agreeability.

As we have now seen, the delight experienced in response to the representation of the beautiful is such a feeling. And this is precisely the reason that it serves, not as the sensuous result of a judgment, but as the grounds of one, as Kant says:

> [S]ince the delight is not based on any inclination of the Subject (or on any other deliberate interest), but the Subject feels himself completely free in respect of the liking which he accords to the object, he can find as reason for his delight no personal conditions to which his own subjective self might alone be party. [Third Critique, section 6:50-51]

That this feeling exists, in other words, is taken for granted -- it is known from subjective experience, not established a priori. The question is how we are to interpret the experience of this delight. If it is determined by no interest, then it cannot be the result of a

judgment of either agreeableness or goodness. Therefore it must be a disinterested delight in the mere representation of the existent object as a representation, not as an existent object. To say that something is beautiful, then, is to say that we are delighted by it, but can trace the delight back to no specific interest. We do not like it because we had been seeking it. We like it because, though we were not prepared for, or hoping for, its existence, it nevertheless "simply pleases", as Kant said in the passage with which this thesis began. Thus the delight itself gives rise to a judgment. Its apparent lack of ground -- or its lack of apparent ground -- makes the delight free, in that it has no phenomenally apprehensible determining grounds. Such disinterestedness, because it suggests a lack of private reasons for the delight and its resulting judgment, implies universal validity. This allows Kant to distinguish the beautiful from the agreeable, again in the indirect manner that he had successfully used to distinguish it from the good.

The merely agreeable cannot be assumed to be agreeable to everyone; in other words, simple gratification, such as liking the taste of apples, cannot be universalized, in the sense of saying that the flavour of an apple must necessarily be gratifying to everyone. This satisfaction is entirely private, in that the person experiencing it can

attribute it only to himself. [Third Critique, section 7:51-2] Our experience of the good, on the other hand, can be universalized only by reference to the concept or principle to which the 'good thing' corresponds. In other words, the judgment is universal due, not to any aspect of the object of sense or our response to it, but to the object of pure practical reason which is merely exemplified by the sense experience. That is, the judgment of practical reason is universally valid precisely because it is objective, and hence independent of any sense experience.

If, however, I am merely pleased by a thing independent of any inclination, or of any objective worth, then my experience is one of aesthetic taste, and the object so judged is neither agreeable nor good, but beautiful. This judgment is entirely subjective, and yet it can be universalized precisely because it is not based on desire. In other words, if my delight in something is truly disinterested, then my reasons for enjoying it are not simply my reasons, and hence this is an enjoyment which I can assume and expect that others will share. This, says Kant, is why we treat beauty as a property of a thing: it is not merely beautiful relative to our particular situation or inclinations, but is judged to be beautiful regardless of such personal concerns. [Third Critique, section 6:51] As a result, we experience the satisfaction derived from beauty

as though our minds have contributed no personal 'data' to the experience -- i.e. as though, in apprehending this object, we are knowing it as it is in itself, independent of our minds. And yet, as a purely subjective but disinterested judgment, it is based on nothing but the way the representation affects our minds.

> As the subjective universal communicability of the mode of representation in a judgement of taste is to subsist apart from the presupposition of any definite concept, it can be nothing else than the mental state present in the free play of imagination and understanding.... [Third Critique, section 9:58]

The implications of this notion are enormous. As Zammito points out:

> Previous philosophers of aesthetics had sought the basis for the judgment of taste in a property of the object, but their search had been vain. Instead, Kant proposed that it be sought in the conformity of the representation of the object to our judgment, i.e., we must find in the rules given by the judgment the ground of the beauty ascribed to the object. This was, as it were, Kant's "Copernican revolution" in aesthetics....[3]

The very delight in the beautiful itself, insofar as it is the basis of the judgment, is thus in some sense both a response to an object of sense, and a response to an activity of the mind. So the satisfaction afforded us by observing the beautiful is, in part, the pleasure of experiencing or sensing the insensible.

As not dependent on the external existence of its object, the beautiful is fundamentally liberated from the

world known through theoretical reason. On the other hand, the feeling it affords is tied only to a singular sense experience, and hence is free from concepts.

It ought to be noted in passing here, with reference to this last point, that while the delight in the beautiful is free from concepts, the object being judged might not be. We are back to the difference between tulips and Mozart's "Clarinet Concerto". As a natural object -- that is, a product of nature itself -- a tulip can be understood, not only as an object of aesthetic judgment, but also as subsumed under a concept. This, as we have seen, does not in itself militate against the possibility of judging this or any other tulip disinterestedly, from the point of view of beauty. It does, however, suggest a potential problem, similar to the problem of being certain that our moral motives are grounded purely in rational judgment. Is it not possible that at least part of the satisfaction afforded by the sensation of a tulip, for example, is due to its agreeable smell? In other words, while the first aesthetic judgment of a tulip does not imply a judgment about other tulips, the first judgment of sense <u>does</u> imply one. So what I think is a purely disinterested delight in the sensuous representation of a second tulip, is really gratification conditioned by my generalized inclination toward objects which smell like that first tulip. By the same token, a

natural or artificial object (in the ordinary sense of artificiality) might be regarded as beautiful and also -- from another point of view -- as good, in either the higher or lower sense of 'good'. In such a case, it might be difficult to say with certainty that the delight we experience when confronted with it is delight in the beauty of it, and not a delight in the object viewed as an instantiation of a concept, the rational judgment of which has established a desire for the existence of phenomena of that type. There are two possible cases of the beautiful which safely escape these difficulties -- that is, which can be unquestionably experienced as free delights. The first is natural or (perhaps) artificial objects which are completely devoid of any gratifying characteristics or apparent purpose. Zammito notes that this kind of "pure" judgment of taste, were it the only kind, would have left Kant with a notion of pure judgment "so restrictive that the only phenomena which seemed to fall within it were relatively trivial -- sea shells and flowers, arabesques and foliage -- things perceived as gratuitously elegant without the least intrinsic meaning."[4]

Art as the Standard of Judgment of the Beautiful

There is, however, another kind of object -- one which is not trivial -- which could be experienced as causing an

unquestionably free delight. Such an object would have to be unique (and therefore our response to it unconditioned by previous 'similar' experience), and free from conceptual identifiability (i.e. from any objective purpose[5]). This kind of object is required in order to give philosophical import to this theory of beauty, or to beauty itself. The requirement is really a demand for an object of sensation which is, in significant ways, exempt from the laws governing ordinary sense experience. Nothing in our response to it is conditioned by inclination, and no inclination towards other objects is produced by it. On the other hand, it is an example or instantiation of no specific kind of thing. In other words, it is neither agreeable nor good in any way, but is, as it were, exclusively beautiful, such that no interest in its existence could possibly mitigate or complicate the freedom of our delight and judgment. This object, as we shall see, is the work of art.

The beautiful is thus identifiable with neither the true (i.e. nature, though the latter can exhibit it) nor the good (universal principles of judgment). The foundation has thus been laid for a new philosophical explanation of the nature of artistic activity, one which makes art, rather than truth, the primary location of the beautiful. This means that all beauty is ultimately explicable in reference to, or by the standard of, the beauty in art. This result

is necessary due to the requirements of the nature of the beautiful. To begin with, it must be a sensuous object, and thus is identifiable with no traditional metaphysical concept, e.g. being. It must give rise to a delight which is conditioned by no desire, and hence cannot, insofar as it is beautiful, be simultaneously experienced as either an instantiation of the good or an object of sensuous inclination.

Kant calls the highest kind of beauty "free beauty", meaning that, as he says, the judgment "presupposes no concept of what the object should be...." [Third Critique, section 16:72] Free beauty in nature requires that we not know the purpose (concept) of the object. [Third Critique, section 16:72] This implies that, as a natural object, a flower, for example, does have a purpose, but "[h]ardly any one but a botanist" knows it. [Third Critique, section 16:72] It is only insofar as we are ignorant of, or deliberately ignoring, the purpose of the object, that its beauty is free. In other words, the more we know, the harder it should be to experience free beauty in nature. [Note that -- as will be addressed in detail in Chapter Three -- this last point is a complete inversion of the implications of the classical views of beauty.]

Thus, the experience of beauty in the purest sense, in order to be had without the 'mediation' of either ignorance

or a process of abstraction -- i.e. without requiring that we treat nature as though it were not nature -- is only possible through the phenomenal experience of that which really has no objective purpose, and is at the same time not merely agreeable (satisfying of a determined interest). Art -- and only art -- satisfies these requirements. As Kant says:

> Nature proved beautiful when it wore the appearance of art; and art can only be termed beautiful, where we are conscious of its being art, while yet it has the appearance of nature. [Third Critique, section 45:167]

This passage will return for a fuller assessment in the next chapter. Here, though, it is worth noting in particular the opening statement. Nature, in order to be judged as beautiful, must not appear to us as itself. Nature is not beautiful by nature, as it were, but, as explained above, only insofar as we can ignore its reality. That is, we must be able to pretend it is not within the realm of truth, in order to see it as beautiful. We must be willfully or innocently blind as to the nature of our ordinary phenomenal experience of products of nature. This in itself might suggest that the beautiful is more naturally located elsewhere, since the language of Kant's depiction of natural beauty seems to be the language of approximation or likeness -- likeness to something which does not merely 'appear' to be essentially beautiful (as opposed to good or

gratifying), but is so. Kant himself tells us that this likeness is precisely to art.

More on the importance of this point, and of the quotation in which it appears, must be reserved until more has been said about Kant's theory of beauty qua beauty, rather than qua sensible object, which has been our focus thus far. What needed to be emphasized at this point, was the necessity of Kant's establishment of a theory of artistic activity which removes beauty from the conceptual world of the thinkers, and places it essentially -- that is, ultimately -- in the hands of the artists. We have now seen the foundation of this theory.

The radical nature of this new foundation, and the use Kant makes of it within his system as a whole, are the topics of the remainder of this thesis.

1. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, iv, 401n [62n].
2. Zammito, p. 109.
3. Zammito, p. 94.
4. Zammito, p. 124.

5. Recall that in section 5, p.46 of the 3rd Critique, Kant says that in order to judge something as good, "I must always know what sort of a thing the object is intended to be, i.e. I must have a concept of it." He here identifies purpose ('intention') with concept.

Chapter Three

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND NATURE

Phenomenal Freedom Revisited

In Chapter 1, we saw how Kant's need to make sense of the notion of human freedom in a deterministic natural world, led him to a necessary split between nature (the true) and morality (the good). For the sake of freedom, Kant thus defended the radical claim that nature is not all there is, thereby (he hoped) completing the modern project, begun with Descartes, of salvaging the distinguished status of the knower -- i.e. of man -- within the new mechanistic understanding of the known (nature). Significantly, though, Kant's method of salvaging our status -- our dignity -- is to locate our means of transcendence in our ability to do, rather than to know. Our freedom is discovered and achieved by reason, but in practice -- i.e. within the realm of experience -- it is in deed, rather than in thought, that we are free.

This means that what we saw in the first chapter were the practical results of the phenomena/noumena distinction in its role as the solution of the 'third antinomy' of pure reason. This antinomy consists in the conflicting but valid claims that (a) there is free (i.e. undetermined) causation

way that precludes any possibility of freedom.[1] Its solution, in theory, is most clearly depicted in the Prolegomena.[2] He says that if nature, understood as the totality of possible experience, consists of things in themselves -- that is, if nature is all there is -- then nothing could be exempt from natural necessity, as shown by science.[3] On the other hand:

> ... if natural necessity is referred merely to appearances and freedom merely to things in themselves, no contradiction arises if we at the same time assume or admit both kinds of causality, however difficult or impossible it may be to make the latter kind conceivable.[4]

With respect to human action, as we have seen, this solution means that we are free insofar as we are noumenal, and determined insofar as we are phenomenal. To be noumenal, that is, free, is -- relative to the notion of nature Kant is using in this context -- to be unnatural.

The 'difficulty' or 'impossibility' of making free causality "conceivable" is not Kant's confession of some shortcoming of his argument for its existence, but rather the fact which holds the key to that very argument. Theoretical reason -- that is, reason understood as our faculty of gaining knowledge about the world in which we (appear to) live -- has led us to a mechanistic understanding of nature. Within this nature, there can be no recourse to an 'uncaused cause' as an ultimate

explanation of any phenomenon. In other words, as stated previously, natural teleology is no longer regarded as scientifically valid. And yet this same science requires that we be able to explain all phenomena by reference to their causes ('no effect without a cause'). If there is no ultimate cause, i.e. no point at which the retracing of the causal steps of any given phenomenon ends, then no phenomenon can ever be fully explained by causal laws. In order for theoretical reason itself to achieve its own purpose, then, it must, as Kant says,

> ... admit another causality, through which something takes place, without its cause being further determined according to necessary laws by a preceding cause, that is, an absolute spontaneity of causes, by which a series of phenomena, proceeding according to natural laws, begins by itself...[5]

This, of course, means that theoretical reason, in order to preserve its own efficacy, must admit of an apparent contradiction, namely that there is free causality in nature. It is true that this freedom belongs only to things in themselves, not appearances, but it is to be used by theoretical reason to explain something about the appearances (i.e. their origin). Hence the seeming contradiction, which would be an actual one if theoretical reason attempted to explain this cause. This type of causality is "inconceivable" in that it cannot be encompassed by theoretical reason. That is, there is

nothing that theoretical reason can say about the existence of such causality, since it is, by its nature, outside of the purview of such reason. And yet, as we have seen, its existence must be admitted. This is the limit that pure reason places on itself, and the requirement of both Kant's theory of freedom and the phenomena/noumena distinction itself: there is something the reality of which reason cannot, without self-contradiction, deny, but the nature of which reason cannot, without self-contradiction, explain. In a most profound sense, then, nature itself -- as possible experience, or the objects of scientific enquiry -- depends upon the existence of something unnatural. Specifically, in the context of the third antinomy, nature as we know it requires the existence of a type of causality, or rather of some causal agent, which is not phenomenal.

Thus, Kant hopes to have shown both that there is noumenal causality, and -- when supplemented by the argument of the second Critique -- that human beings are capable of being noumenal causes. And morality, and hence the good, are thus seen to depend on the reality of the unknowable noumenal realm for their existence. This in itself points to the problem, explained at the end of Chapter 1, of the possibility of ever actually experiencing ourselves as moral agents. Knowing that such agency must exist does not necessarily afford us the experience of it, and as objects

of experience, both the objective and subjective sensations of the good (the apprehension of an instantiation of the moral law and its attendant delight, respectively) are explicable by reference to natural laws -- or else, as the third antinomy shows, they are not explicable at all. It is important, though, that for Kant, short of giving up even the possibility of freedom (and hence morality), we must admit the reality of the noumena. If, though, it is arguably impossible ever to experience our moral action as free -- the action itself being at best an object of rationally determined interest -- then the problem of phenomenal freedom remains unsolved.

And the problem must be solved, or else freedom (i.e. morality itself for humans) will have no bearing on our lives as we live them. That is, freedom will be only theoretically, and not practically, significant. This latter way of phrasing the issue might at first seem ironic, or merely backwards. It must be remembered, however, what exactly is the significance of noumenal causality within the contexts of theoretical and practical reason. It is to theoretical reason that the mere existence of the noumena as a separate and unknowable realm is a meaningful and -- as the third antinomy shows -- necessary postulate. For the sake of moral action -- that is, within the arena of practical reason -- the mere existence of the noumena is of

no consequence, except insofar as we can make phenomena conform to noumenal rules. It is in action (i.e. in freely caused motion) that we know ourselves to be moral, and thus it is in moral action -- that is, in actual obedience to the moral law, rather than in any mere recognition of it -- that the concept of freedom acquires practical significance. Theoretical reason must admit the existence of freedom, but can go no further.[6] Practical reason must give us the experience of freedom, which means making it phenomenal. Kant explains this in the Second Critique, as follows:

> [The moral law] defines the law for a causality the concept of which was only negative in speculative philosophy, and for the first time it gives objective reality to this concept.[7]

Further, and pivotally in this context, he says that the moral law's function as

> the principle of the deduction of freedom as a causality of pure reason, is a sufficient substitute for any a priori justification, since theoretical reason had to assume at least the possibility of freedom in order to fill one of its own needs [i.e. the complete causal explanation of phenomena].... The moral law adds to the negative concept a positive definition, that of a reason which determines the will directly.... Thus reason, which with its ideas always became transcendent when proceeding in a speculative manner, can be given for the first time an objective although still only practical reality; its transcedent use is changed into an immanent use, whereby reason becomes, in the field of experience, an efficient cause through ideas.[8] [emphasis added]

An 'experience' is the mind's connection of

appearances.[9] The "field of experience" is thus precisely the world of relations and events which Kant referred to as "sensuous nature" in the all-important passage cited on page 11 of Chapter 1, the world upon which we, as moral agents, impose the laws of "supersensuous nature". By experiencing instantiations of the moral law -- i.e. moral actions in sensuous nature -- as instantiations of the law (to understand such a phenomenon in any other way will not allow us to experience freedom through the feeling of approval), we are experiencing (rather than theoretically postulating) reason as an "efficient cause through ideas", the "ideas" in question being the moral laws themselves. Within the theoretical use of reason, the ideas of reason have only transcendent reality, meaning that they are not part of the natural world (or the world experienced as external). Nothing in the spatio-temporal realm seems, to theoretical reason, to really correspond to the idea of "freedom", for example. The moral law, on the other hand, is an idea of reason which can, insofar as it is being obeyed, and hence experienced as an efficient cause -- as an artificial substitute for the colliding phenomena of natural law -- be understood to have "objective although still only practical reality". Reason can touch the world of sense in practice only, and specifically in practical 'application' of the rational determining principle of the will of a sensuous

being -- i.e. of a potentially moral agent qua phenomena. In other words, as we saw in Chapter 1, we must impose noumenal rules on phenomena in order to give objective reality to the rational idea of free causality. And it is only insofar as we are doing this that we are free in experience, meaning free in fact rather than merely in theory (to use theory in its common, not Kantian, sense). Respect, remember, is a two-sided feeling. As directed toward the moral law (the idea) itself, it is experienced as a negative feeling, one of humiliation. As directed toward sensuous nature, it is experienced as a desire to arrange the appearances in a way that corresponds to the law. Both sides of respect are the direct result of recognizing the law as a law, i.e. as a universal principle of action discovered by reason. Even when respect seems to result from the perception of an instance of moral action in nature, Kant makes it clear, as we have seen, that it is the law (idea) which the action exemplifies that inspires respect, and not the objective sensation itself. Respect, on its 'second side', as a desire to obey (i.e. instantiate) the moral law, is thus identifiable with the rationally determined will. Given, then, that it is causality through freedom, as a rational idea, to which we give objective reality in morality, the will -- as a faculty of sensuous (i.e. natural) desire -- must truly <u>be</u> determined by the

moral law. In other words, respect must be the desire according to which we act, or judge the actions of others as satisfying phenomena -- if it determines neither decisions to act nor responses, then it is not identifiable as an interest -- or else Kant has not given objective reality to freedom at all. The reason for this claim is contained in the final sentence of the passage quoted above, concerning the nature of this objective reality of freedom. Freedom, as a rational idea, becomes objectively real to the extent that "its transcendent use is changed into an immanent use...." The difference between transcendent and immanent concepts is explained in Third Critique, as follows: a transcendent concept is one which is "incapable of ever furnishing a cognition of the object...." [Third Critique, section 57:210], and Kant identifies such concepts, of course, as rational ideas. [Third Critique, 57:210] Such a concept "differs from a concept of understanding, for which an adequately answering experience may always be supplied, and which, on that account, is called immanent." [Third Critique, 57:210]

An immanent concept, then, is one for which corresponding experiences can in fact exist -- not merely the possibility of such phenomena, but their actual existence, is required. This does not mean that the concept is a posteriori. By "possibility" in this context, I mean

the mere 'potential' to be a part of nature (however that might be made conceivable), and by 'actual existence', the object's reality within nature understood as the totality of possible experience. If freedom is to be made an immanent concept -- which is only another way of saying 'If we are to be able to experience ourselves as responsible moral agents' -- then there must be possible instances of moral action. That is, there must be possible actions motivated completely and unquestionably by respect for the moral law. What this requirement means, ultimately, is that some will must (sometimes) actually be determined exclusively by reason. The reason this is necessary is that it is only as determining ground of the will (i.e. of a rational interest) that the law effects us as phenomena. In other words, this is the precise point of contact between the sensuous and supersensuous realms, which makes it the only means of giving an "immanent use" to the concept of freedom, that is, of making noumenal causality, remembering that the very notion of causality is inherently tied to nature[10], and hence noumenal causality is relevant or meaningful only insofar as it is real in the (natural) world. Strictly speaking, there is nowhere else for such (or any) causality to exist, so that it must be actualizable (i.e. a part of possible experience) if it is to be anything more than the theoretical postulate of the First Critique. And it must be

more if we are truly free agents -- that is, noumenal causes.

The Impossibility of Moral Freedom in Experience

These problems having been exposed, one might wish to save freedom without any need for recourse to free action in the sense of physical motion among other sensible objects. To do this, one would have to argue that the determination of the will can be complete without necessarily resulting in actions that correspond exactly to the universal principles which determine the will. This might at least give us the experience of moral agency as a goal, or as a standard against which to assess our (or others') actual behaviour. This could be maintained as long as the moral feeling proper -- respect -- fell within the limits of what this 'real' moral experience consisted in. Respect is the determination of the will -- i.e. the arousing of an interest in the real existence of an object or action, in this case of one which is exemplary of the moral law. If there are no actually moral actions -- the difficulty which was noted earlier, and which presently returns as a pivotal issue -- then this attempt to make sense of Kant's theory of freedom by limiting the criteria for the experience of freedom to the arousal of a rational interest, seems to become necessary (assuming that saving moral freedom, rather than criticizing

Kant's attempt at doing so, is our concern). Given that the nature of moral experience is so limited -- it involves nothing beyond (i.e. posterior to) desiring an instantiation of a concept -- it is questionable whether Kant could make any sense of the resultant implied notion of a determined will. A determined will, or at least a rationally determined one, would thus be precisely an exclusive desire -- remembering that reason determines the will by thwarting all natural desires -- which is not acted upon. It is as though reason can determine the will just long enough to give us a glimpse of what we ought to do, but natural desires reassert themselves as actual incentives to move in the sensuous world. But this would mean that we could never feel approval of our own actions, since there is no instance in which they actually satisfy the desire for an instantiation of the moral law -- that desire being respect, the rationally determined will itself. Further, we could never approve of others' actions, for the same reasons. It would seem, then, that Kant was establishing the reality of the feeling of approval primarily to implicitly establish its opposite, disapproval. Disapproval is all we could actually experience in response to actions, since it would be impossible to perform a moral one, and approval is to respect as gratification is to natural inclination. This last point is, I believe, something close to Kant's actual

intention, since he does openly question the possibility of performing a purely moral (i.e. disinterested) act. Still, I think Kant will have a way of salvaging at least some sort of positive role for approval as well.

However, in explaining the meaning given to free causality by practical reason, Kant says that "we have defined the will with respect to its causality by means of a law which cannot be counted among the natural laws of the world of sense."[11] The need to define the will with respect to its causality strongly implies that moral freedom requires the actual causal efficacy of the freely determined will in order to be made complete. The will's causal efficacy, though, is precisely what is called into question by the concern over whether it is possible to perform a moral act.

Intriguingly, after differentiating transcendent from immanent concepts in the manner explained above, Kant goes on to identify the transcendence of a concept with its indemonstrability, and immanence with demonstrability. [Third Critique, 57:210] And then he offers the following somewhat surprising -- but, in light of what has been shown, hopefully not too surprising -- insight:

> It follows from the above that the rational concept of the supersensible substrate of all phenomena generally, or even of that which must be laid at the basis of our elective will in respect of moral laws, i.e. the rational concept of

> transcendental freedom, is at once specifically an indemonstrable concept, and a rational idea, whereas virtue is so in a measure. For nothing can be given which in itself qualitatively answers in experience to the rational concept of the former, while in the case of virtue not empirical product of the above causality attains the degree that the rational idea prescribes as the rule. [Third Critique, 57:211]

If making the rational idea of free causality immanent -- which is the meaning of human moral freedom, and the source of our dignity -- requires that the rationally determined will actually result in actions which instantiate the moral law, then this statement seems to imply that freedom in experience is impossible. To say that our motivation to act cannot "attain the degree" of the idea of freedom, is to say that our actions are never purely caused by a free will, but by inclination, or at best by some 'combination' of the two. To save free action in this case would require some explanation of how one can act in a partially disinterested (and thus also partially interested) manner. In other words, can we make a clear enough separation of our right and wrong (i.e. free and natural) reasons for acting in a particular way to justify the claim that we are at least partially free. This, I suspect, is where the notion of cultivating the feeling of approval as the appropriate response to instantiations of the moral law becomes important. Virtue is a disposition that we can only hope to attain "in a measure", presumably because other

motivations, natural ones, supervene upon our will at the moment we make the decision to act in specific way. The desire for mere gratification interferes with the desire to act dutifully. Cultivating the feeling of approval allows people to be motivated to act by the hope of attaining this feeling, rather than gratification. This means that people must -- if they are ever going to become truly moral agents -- learn to do the right thing for the wrong reason, with the requirement that this eventually give way to a purer motivation.[12] In order to do (instantiate) the good because it is the good, we must first learn to do the good because it feels good. That is, we must learn to like instantiations of the good, simply because they are good.

Still, as seen in Chapter 1, the above does not make feeling the determining ground of morality, since approval only exists as a result of experiencing the satisfaction of the desire for instantiations of the moral law (i.e. respect). And this, in turn, is exclusively the result of recognizing the law as such through reason.

The question is how such cultivation can take place, seeing as how it seems to rest on a foundation of 'borrowed respect', of a feeling of approval which -- at the outset -- is in some sense the result of satisfying someone else's (i.e. a moral educator's) rationally determined interest. This, as noted on page 37 (note 25) of this thesis, means

that we are feeling the moral feelings (respect and approval) as a result of someone else's judgment. This question, if carried in the direction of the reasonableness of such a claim about borrowed respect, would lead to a critique of the consistency of Kant's theory of moral action. Our purpose, in this context, is different, because this question can also be carried in the direction of an assessment of the possibility of realizing any of these central notions of practical reason in experience, a concern which is properly Kantian, and which, as we shall see, is at the foundation of his theory of beauty and artistic activity.

As for virtue itself, it does not have the status of a rational idea. It is tied to our sensuous nature as a general disposition to act out of respect for the moral law.[13] It is thus posterior to both the determining judgment and the determined interest, and is loosely identifiable as a tendency to act in the manner that, in theory, the judgment and its resultant interest prescribe to each individual case. In other words, it bypasses the explicit judgment of each case -- that is, of the maxim being instantiated in each case -- which nevertheless remains implicit and the determinant of what constitutes virtue. Virtue is, in effect, a property of a person who is generally moved to act in a way that is consistent with a

freely determined interest, i.e. to act, not merely in a way that coincides with the moral law, but in a way that is determined by a sense of duty to obey the law.

Virtue, then, is the name of the result of the process of habituating or cultivating the feeling of approval (which Kant says we must do[14]). It is not determined by rational judgment, but is learned of acquired over time (i.e. through experience). It is a product of a rationally determined will, in effect once removed from the determination of the will, and hence not an example of freedom in experience, but rather a part of Kant's attempt to make free causality naturally explicable. Virtue is precisely the overcoming of natural desire for the sake of acting according to the moral law, which is why Kant calls virtue "moral disposition in conflict."[15] To be disposed to the desire identifiable as respect for the law must be a trait acquired through constant moral practice (i.e. through habituation), or else the disinterestedness (i.e. freedom) of the rational judgment of maxims is undercut. Having been cultivated, though, virtue has a relationship to approval (properly speaking, the satisfaction of respect) that is in one way very similar to that between favour -- which, like virtue, is not a desire but a disposition -- and the pleasure in the beautiful. The difference, though, is that virtue is established objectively (by reference to determining

concepts) and hence is not free, while favour is subjective. We regard ourselves as free, though, to the extent that we are virtuous, i.e. to the extent that we are able to push aside -- or to experience ourselves as pushing aside -- natural desires. This "moral disposition" is as close as we come, then, to a direct experience of ourselves as noumenal selves. In the passage quoted from the Third Critique, regarding immanent and transcendent concepts, immanence is explicitly denied to the concept of free causality (moral freedom), in apparent contradiction of the claim of the Second Critique that freedom is made immanent in practice. If the concept of freedom is now considered "indemonstrable", then 'phenomenal freedom' (i.e. the experience of ourselves as moral) means not freedom in the world of appearance, but simply the appearance of freedom. Or rather, the indemonstrability of the rational concept of freedom serves as a reminder that phenomenal freedom could not possibly mean anything but the latter. An analysis of the development of Kant's critical philosophy from one Critique to the next is a project which has often been undertaken, but which is beyond the scope of the present work. Still, to explicitly deny immanence to transcendental freedom -- not as a concept of theoretical reason (which would be in accord with the third antinomy), but as "that which must be laid at the basis of our elective will in

respect of moral laws" [Third Critique, 57:211] -- does suggest a change of view regarding the status of freedom as a real cause in experience. Rather, to make the shift appear less radical, what Kant seems to have reassessed is the real possibility of such freedom. That making the concept of noumenal causality immanent is not merely means to, but the meaning of, moral freedom in action, remains Kant's contention. That this can be done, a notion that was held to be problematic in the Second Critique, here seems to have been rejected as even a possibility. We cannot experience freedom directly. We can, however, experience ourselves as (at least partially) virtuous. Through cultivation or habituation, we acquire this disposition of morality (virtue), which means that when we act in a way that is experienced by us as moral, we do so by this habituated disposition, and not as a result of the free determination of the will directly. This habit is the experiential analog of -- or more exactly, substitute for -- the respect for the moral law which ought to but, it appears, cannot, motivate our actions.

Saving the Consistency of Kant's System, and Saving Moral Action

We may wish to describe this whole apparent shift of emphasis in a way that makes it less a case of Kant changing his mind, than of his simply having a different purpose in

this different context. This, were it possible, would go a long way to salvaging the (in my opinion worthy) project of discovering the unity of the three Critiques. That is, it would allow us to understand Kant's 'critical period' as a systematic process designed to encompass all of the major traditional philosophic questions and concerns, in the face of the early modern problematizing of this tradition. As we have seen, this way of reading Kant shows him to have deliberately -- systematically -- separated the true and the good, precisely for the purpose of preserving ethics as a philosophical concern, and freedom as a morally meaningful concept. It further separates the beautiful from the first two in order to keep it from collapsing into agreeability, i.e. in order to keep it from becoming a vacuous or superfluous concept, in light of modern empirical science, and of the necessary removal of morality from the sensuous world. A reading of Kant which takes his different treatments of similar topics as merely an example of a thinker changing his mind, is less able to offer an interpretation of the three major works as a systematic whole.

So, how can we explain away the Third Critique's apparent retraction of a central thesis of the second -- namely that practical reason makes freedom immanent? If this can be done, it will have to be by way of an

explanation of the purposes of the two works in question which sees them a holding two positions in a kind of dialectical process. Toward this end, it will hardly matter whether this process is one which Kant himself underwent over the period of writing the Critiques, or whether it was more of less fully conceived at or near the outset. What matters is that any differences found in the last of the three works can thus be seen as something other than an implicit disowning of some of the views stated in the first two.

Some hint of what sort of explanation would need to be given to justify such an interpretation -- no complete justification will be given here, but the possibility of one is assumed as the foundation of the final step of the argument of this chapter, which follows -- can be found in the concept of virtue, or rather in the sorry lack of serious discussion of it in the Critique of Practical Reason. The reason for this lack, I would suggest, is that virtue is relevant entirely with respect to how people act over a long period of time -- specifically, with their disposition to act dutifully in those situations in which natural inclinations are "in conflict" with the free motivation of respect. Kant does, however, explain in detail how respect overcomes these inclinations in individual cases, or rather, in the individual case per se,

as we have seen. In effect, the difference between respect and virtue is that respect explains how our wills ought to be morally determined, whereas virtue explains how, in actual experience, our wills are in fact morally determined. Respect, or for that matter the Second Critique itself, explains how we are truly morally free -- that is, how we are noumenal causes. Virtue is our actual sensuous practice of morality, the actual ground of our morality in action. The truly free determination of the will cannot lead to action -- this is what it means to say that we can never really perform a moral act, i.e. instantiate a moral law. And yet virtue is the ability to establish the primacy of moral maxims as motives to act -- that is, it makes sensuous motion in accordance with such maxims possible. Kant has seemingly turned away from the notion that practical reason makes the rational idea of freedom immanent, but -- as the passage from the Third Critique regarding the immanence of virtue shows -- he has not turned away from the notion of virtue as a means to moral action. That is, he seems to be committed to saying that we can act morally without the concept of freedom being thereby made immanent. Freedom is within possible experience, but freedom remains transcendent.

Although it is paradoxical -- or perhaps because it is -- the above conclusion is circumstantial evidence

against the view that Kant simply changed his mind about the immanence of freedom. The Second Critique has a radical function in Kant's thought. As we have seen, its core contention is that freedom (for rational beings) means imposing noumenal rules on phenomena. And yet in that very work he openly questions whether this can be done. It seems that, while the function of the First Critique, within the critical philosophy as a whole, is to limit theoretical reason in such a way that it remains plausible to posit the reality of something beyond the true (or knowable) realm of nature, so the Second Critique places limits on the practical reason relative to nature. That is, the noumena themselves, and their freedom, are not limited, but their relationship to the world of experience -- i.e. their applicability to the lives of rational but sensuous beings, is limited. These two works, then, truly present us with, and radically separate, the is and the ought. In order to be purely -- noumenally or supersensuously -- free, we have to make the rational concept of freedom immanent. In other words, this is what 'is' done in the case of the free determination of the will. Reason is thus our means to true freedom, in the sense of being an uncaused cause.[16] But if we do not act in accordance with the freely determined will -- as Kant himself suggests we do not -- then the theoretical purpose of the concept of free causality is

lost. Remember that freedom, for theoretical reason, was meant to make intelligible the scientific belief in complete causal explanations of phenomena. If nothing but the will -- and even that only ambiguously -- is ever determined by reason, then no observable phenomena are actually explicable with reference to freedom. What has been added to the concept of freedom, then, is only an understanding of what at least the human version of it would have to consist in. In fact -- that is, in experience -- no such causation ever takes place. We are not free in action, but we know what freedom would mean, were it possible. Acting (or judging others' actions) by the dictates of reason -- i.e. in accordance with a freely determined will -- is what ought to be, but is not (and, at least at this point of human history, cannot be). Freedom is the concept by which we recognize ourselves as moral beings, and can be no more. That is, we can say no more about our real moral freedom than that it exists, albeit in a way that cannot be applied to experience, i.e. made immanent. The immanence of freedom is what ought to be, and the Second Critique shows how it would be achieved, were it achievable. Our true freedom lies -- for the purposes of our natural capacity -- within this impossible 'ought'.

There is, on the other hand, the aforementioned appearance of freedom -- i.e. 'phenomenal freedom' or

'freedom in experience' -- which is a habituated approximation of our real but unattainable freedom. Virtue, in effect the habitual substitute for actual respect, is described in a later work as follows:

> Virtue... is not to be defined and esteemed merely as a perfected skill and... as a habit acquired by long practice of morally good actions. For if this habit is not a result of resolute, firm, and more and more purified principles, like any other mechanism of technical practical reason it is neither armed for all circumstances nor secured against the change which may be produced by new allurements.

To begin with the obvious, Kant here reiterates the definition of virtue as a habit. In other words, actions exemplifying virtue are not (directly, at least) the result of rational judgment, but of cultivated disposition. Further, though, he says that virtue is the result of increasingly "purified principles". Moral education, as we have argued, must, for Kant, involve learning to feel the satisfaction of someone else's rationally determined desire, or else the notion of cultivating approval (a necessary response to such satisfaction) is incoherent. So virtue really is, at the outset, 'just a habit', and the hope is that the principle of motivation of virtuous actions will -- in and through the already virtuous person -- become "more and more purified", i.e. more and more rational. Contrary to the demands of the moral theory of the Second Critique, which dealt with the unrealizable ought, actual moral

behaviour in experience is at the outset, and to some extent always, the result of sensuously acquired habit, and not of rational judgment. The requirement -- Kant actually makes it part of the definition of virtue -- that the habitual actions come, over time, to be closer approximations of true moral action, gives virtue a quasi-teleological nature. Virtue ought to become 'respect proper' (the truly rationally determined will, which nevertheless is without real causal efficacy). That is, a spatio-temporal motive is said to be perfected by becoming a non-spatio-temporal one. And yet virtue remains our real motive to act (insofar as we are 'moral'), and virtue cannot truly instantiate the moral law. Only the noumenally caused desire (respect) can do this, and it can only do so as a 'postulate' of practical reason -- that is, as shown above, it can only do so in the realm of the ought, and never in the world of experience. So virtue is aimed at what cannot be attained by any actual motive of sensuous action. To this last point, we might add the words 'so far'. The question of the moral development of the species towards a realizable moral freedom is an enormous issue which will not be addressed here, except that some such theory might help to explain how Kant intends for virtue to become more of a truly (i.e. rationally or noumenally) free cause, when everything else about his ethical theory strongly suggests that it cannot.

What has been established is that (1) we know we are noumenally free, (2) we cannot really cause anything, as noumena, in the world of the senses, although we ought to do so, and (3) we experience ourselves (i.e. appear to ourselves) as free only through habituated or 'cultivated' moral behaviour.

The Creative Artist as Moral Bridge-Builder

The final question of this thesis regarding morality itself, is how the understanding of ourselves as noumenally free, which grounds our experience of ourselves as spatio-temporally free (i.e. virtuous), although it cannot actually cause spatio-temporal actions freely, can be maintained in the face of its non-phenomenal status. That is, how do we continue to tie (what we call) virtue to freedom -- necessary for experiencing ourselves as morally responsible, when virtuous actions are, strictly speaking, not moral (i.e. noumenally caused), but only habituated actions which approximate free ones? In simple terms, given the supersensuous nature of our real freedom, how is it that we can feel free? Or, put yet another way, how does virtue stay linked to noumenal causality, however tenuous the link may be?

The Third Critique holds the key to answering these questions. To begin with, it is worth noting that the

passage quoted on page 70, in which Kant claims that the rational concept of freedom cannot be made immanent (i.e. demonstrated), is from section 57 of the Third Critique. Section 58 deals with the purposiveness of beauty in both nature and art. Section 59 is titled "Beauty as the symbol of morality".

In Chapter 2, we saw the essence of Kant's theory of beauty, concluding with his historically ground-breaking claim (or implied claim) that the beautiful is not to be discovered by the man of wisdom (i.e. it is not basically similar to or identifiable with the true), but to be produced by the artist. More precisely, we saw that though the natural world can be judged as beautiful, this can be done only as long as we, in effect, pretend it is not nature. It must appear to us as art, in order to be judged to be beautiful. In light of what has now been said about Kant's need to connect noumenal and phenomenal freedom in the experience of sensuous humans, let us re-examine the famous passage on the beauty of nature and art, respectively:

> Nature proved beautiful when it wore the appearance of art; and art can only be termed beautiful, where we are conscious of its being art, while yet it has the appearance of nature. [Third Critique, 45:167]

So art sets the standard of beauty against which natural beauty is judged, in complete contradistinction to,

say, the Aristotelian theory of beauty in art. For Aristotle, of course, art is imitation, but this leaves the question of just what is being imitated. Without going into great detail, we can glean the essence of his view from the following statement:

> [P]oetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do -- which is the aim of poetry, though it affixes proper names to the characters....[18]

It is accuracy of content which makes art beautiful. In other words, to put it simply, art, to be beautiful, must appear to be natural (which for Aristotle means to depict the essence of things independent of accidents). This makes nature the location of beauty proper, and art merely judged beautiful to the extent that it compares favourably to that standard -- in principle, the exact opposite of Kant's depiction of the relationship between natural and artistic beauty. For Aristotle, then, the artist is an imitator of nature, in effect a maker of copies (i.e. examples) of the nature of things. For Kant, the artist -- not any particular artist, of course, but the artist in principle -- makes the objects -- once again, not any particular artwork, but art as such -- which are the proper location of the beautiful. Other things are beautiful because they seem to

have the property of a work of art. For Kant, nature -- i.e. our experience, and only insofar as we are assessing it aesthetically -- 'imitates' art. Art depicts or presents objects of experience, but it is not this 'discursive' content which makes it beautiful. Rather, the objects depicted are merely the matter arranged into the beautiful form (i.e. the form which provokes a subjective but universalizable delight).

> The imagination (as a productive faculty of cognition) is a powerful agent for creating, as it were, a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature.... By this means we get a sense of our freedom from the law of association... with the result that the material can be borrowed by us from nature in accordance with that law, but be worked up by us into something else -- namely, what surpasses nature. [Third Critique, 49:176]

The beautiful qua beautiful "surpasses nature" by being experienced as not bound to concepts of the understanding. Specifically, as we have seen, the beautiful provokes a free -- i.e. unnatural -- delight, even if that delight is in natural objects inasmuch as they are looked at as though they are products of artistic, rather than natural, activity.

Here, though, we arrive at the second half of Kant's seeming paradox concerning natural and artistic beauty. Art is beautiful as long as it has "the appearance of nature". He inserts an all-important proviso, however, which is that

art be seen to be art even as it appears like nature. This, I believe, must be interpreted to mean that art is beautiful because, though it seems to be in nature, it is not of nature. In other words, it is entirely within the realm of sensuous experience -- this partly explains his insistence on the beautiful's singularity -- but is nevertheless known to be a product of deliberate human design. Further, nature's apparent lack of purpose -- of motion by final causality -- as shown by the mechanistic laws of modern physics, is the model according to which the God-emulating artist creates his "second nature". What this means, precisely, is that art appears to be part of the mechanistic natural order -- and hence not to fulfill a rational purpose (i.e. not to be a willed instantiation of a concept) -- and at the same time is known to be unnatural. In other words, it is experienced as neither the good nor the true. The most important aspect of the creative act itself, is contained in the following passage:

> Since talent, as an innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to nature, we may put it this way: Genius is the innate mental aptitude through which nature gives the rule to art. [Third Critique 168]

That aspect of the artist which allows him to produce beauty is itself a product of nature; but the product of genius is neither nature nor an imitation of nature. It is, in other words, an artificial world which approximates the

real one (i.e. nature) only in being similarly rule-governed to no apparent end. The artist as genius -- i.e. insofar as he is creating beautiful objects -- is not a noumenal cause, but his creations are not products of sensuous nature. Rather, they constitute an artificial nature. This, as we saw in Chapter 1, is precisely the effect that noumenal causality (moral freedom) would produce in the phenomenal realm, were it possible to actually instantiate the moral law.

Art evokes a delight that is neither approval nor gratification, and, as we have seen, this fact is essential to Kant's definition of beauty. The judgment of the artwork, and by its standard, of all other beauty, is the result of perceiving something to be purposive (i.e. designed) but without purpose (i.e. not tied to a concept). [Third Critique, 11:62-3]

As explained in Chapter 2, the beautiful affords us the only unproblematic experience of freedom. We experience a free (i.e. undetermined) feeling. In this chapter, we have seen just how problematic is the notion of free moral experience. And yet we consider ourselves -- as causal agents -- to be free, i.e. to be capable of rationally determined actions. It appears that Kant is claiming that we are not capable of such freedom -- of applying our noumenal selves to the world of experience in a cause-effect

manner. We are correct in believing that we are truly free, but mistaken -- from the critical philosopher's point of view -- in believing that we can act freely. Still, we experience ourselves as moral agents, by way of the concept of virtue. The question is how we can tie this concept to anything beyond the phenomenal realm, in such a way that we can treat the free determination of the will as the impossible but real goal of our phenomenal experience of freedom (remembering that this latter is only an appearance of freedom). That is, can we hope, through habituated action, to graduate to a more "purified" principle of action, i.e. the truly moral principle?

The conclusive answer to this question is beyond the scope of this project. The general nature of Kant's attempt at an answer -- of his attempt to make human dignity something more than the empty concept that freedom is, within the purview of theoretical reason -- is the ultimate purpose of this thesis, as it establishes the full profundity of the radical foundation of the modern notion of artistic creativity.

We have already seen much of the answer to this final question. The beautiful, as singular, is not tied to any concept. As a result, our delight in it is necessarily disinterested, as it is neither tied to any determination of the will, nor to a natural inclination resulting from a

previous experience with items of the same kind. Our delight in the representation of the beautiful, then, is phenomenally free, and is the determining ground of the judgment of taste. On the one hand, the sensuous nature of the experience is much like the appearance of freedom manifest as virtue. Unlike respect and inclination, remember, favour -- which has an analogous relationship to the pleasure in the beautiful as the first two have to approval and gratification, respectively -- is described, not as a desire (i.e. interest), but as a disposition to respond in a certain way. Virtue is also a disposition, and not a desire. The difference between the two is that favour is a disposition rooted in the nature and arrangement of our cognitive faculties, whereas virtue is acquired through habit. On the other hand, the disinterestedness of the judgment of the beautiful is analogous to that of the pure moral judgment. The difference here, is that the object of aesthetic judgment is sensible and particular, while that of moral judgment is intelligible and universal. Ironically, then, the aesthetic judgment's difference from that of phenomenal freedom is that it is more rationally grounded, while its difference from the judgment of noumenal freedom is that it is more dependent on sensation. That is, it gives us <u>real</u> freedom in experience, as opposed to virtue, but no pure rationality (i.e. reliance on concepts), as

opposed to moral judgment proper. And, as we have seen, the source of the standard of beauty -- i.e. the genius of the creative artist -- is, though admittedly mysterious, nevertheless a product of nature.

Beauty thus has the status of a kind of intermediary between phenomenal and noumenal freedom. Most importantly, the experience of beauty, as free and yet dependent upon sensation, serves as a symbol of moral freedom. [Third Critique, 59:223] It is important to observe the precise meaning of this statement. A symbol, for Kant, is a sensible presentation of a rational concept -- that is, of a concept which cannot be demonstrated (i.e. made immanent). [Third Critique, 59:221] It must therefore present the concept by way of analogy alone, since it cannot be a literal example of an indemonstrable concept. [Third Critique, 59:222] The beautiful symbolizes the good by giving rise to a judgment which is free and universalizable, and a delight which is independent of natural inclination. As such, it in effect brings moral freedom down to earth, although only figuratively, since, of course -- regardless of the 'ought' of the second Critique -- the 'is' of it is that transcendental freedom (i.e. morality, noumenal causality) cannot be instantiated in sensuous nature.

So the beautiful offers us a reminder of our supersensuous nature, thus 'ennobling' and 'elevating' us

above "mere sensibility". [Third Critique, 59:224] And this gives us a push in the direction of attempting to act morally -- that is, to achieve our status and dignity as free causal agents. The universalizability of aesthetic judgment, though subjective, makes us cognizant of a higher pleasure than that of the private judgment of the agreeable. And this, in turn, encourages us to seek the universalizable pleasure of moral action (approval). That is, by being analogous to the object of pure moral judgment, the beautiful reinforces our desire for the phenomenal approximation of freedom. We wish to act dutifully partly because we have enjoyed the contemplative pleasure of something of universal worth (i.e. something the value of which can be expected to be agreed upon by everyone). Kant makes it very clear that it is the absolute moral good that he is referring to as being symbolized by the beautiful -- we need only recall his very definition of symbol, explained above. And yet, the conclusion of section 59, and of the "Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgement", is the following:

> Taste makes, as it were, the transition from the charm of sense to habitual moral interest possible without too violent a leap, for it represents the imagination, even in its freedom, as amenable to a final determination for understanding, and teaches us to find, even in sensuous objects, a free delight apart from any charm of sense. [Third Critique, 59:225]

It is the habit of moral interest (i.e. virtue) that is

encouraged by aesthetic judgment. Freedom in the sensuous world is shown to have an appeal, reinforcing the habit of virtue, i.e. helping to cultivate it. This is the philosophical import of the creation of a "second nature". Art, which, qua beautiful, is not imitating anything, but rather creating something, as seen above, has been made the central link in the chain binding the noumenal and phenomenal realms with respect to freedom. And for the first time, it must be emphasized, nature is not the (philosopher's) standard of judgment of the beautiful; art is. The artist qua artist is the man who brings freedom into the realm of experience, thus making it possible for us to live at least apparently moral lives. Without the artist -- remembering that all beauty depends on that which he creates -- our exemption (in action) from the mechanism of nature would be even more questionable and tenuous than it already is.

The currently fashionable catchword, creativity, has roots this deep, and it is to Kant that we must answer whenever we come to feel the need to take the notion seriously again -- that is, to bring it back into the arena of philosophical discussion, as one of a number of fundamentally different theories of the relationship between art and the beautiful.

1. Kant, Immanuel, Critique of Pure Reason (F. Max Muller, translator), Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, B472-3: p. 318-9.

2. Kant, Immanuel, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (Paul Carus, translator), Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1977.

3. Prolegomena, section 53: p. 84.

4. Prolegomena, section 53: p. 84.

5. First Critique, B:474 (p. 320)

6. Critique of Practical Reason, v, 49: 159.

7. Ibid., v, 47:157.

8. Ibid., v, 48:158.

9. Ibid., v, 49:159.

10. Critique of Practical Reason, v, 56:165.

11. Ibid., v, 50:160.

12. I am indebted to Dr. Samuel Ajzenstat for this depiction of Kantian moral education as a matter of learning to do the right thing for the wrong reasons, and for cashing out some of the implications of this view for our status as moral agents. This important insight was imparted to me in private communication, as well as in the unpublished paper "Simulating a Self", delivered at McMaster University in March, 1993. Its full grounding is contained in Ajzenstat, Samuel, The Evolution of Autonomy: Kant's Empirical Science of Man, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania], 1986.

13. Ibid., v, 84: 191.

14. Ibid., v, 38:150.

15. Ibid., v, 84: 191.

16. An uncaused efficient cause, not a final cause. Kant is appropriating the Christian notion of an 'active' first principle, and applying it -- at least for the purposes of intelligibility to humans, who perceive the world as a collection of spatially distinguishable individuals -- to his depiction of the free causality of individual human beings.

17. Kant, Immanuel, The Metaphysics of Morals, excerpted in Critique of Practical Reason (Lewis White Beck, translator), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949, vi, 385: 354.

18. Aristotle, Poetics (Ingram Bywater, translator), in McKeon, Richard (ed.), The Basic Works of Aristotle, New York: Random House, 1941, 1451b5-10.

CONCLUSION

This thesis was intended to show Kant's grounds for establishing the modern notion of artistic creativity. In part, this was done as a way of bringing back into the realm of respectable philosophical discourse, an idea which has, in recent decades, become little more than a catchword.

The evolution of this concept through post-Kantian philosophy would be an enormously rewarding pursuit, which will not be undertaken here. It should at least be noted, though, that if Kant's method of salvaging philosophy is regarded as at least partly inescapable, then the only thing preventing art from being freedom in the highest sense -- and hence the definitive human capacity -- is the reality of noumenal freedom. That is, if the existence of the noumena is denied, then aesthetics becomes more than the science which explains our means of experiencing ourselves as moral agents. Art becomes the highest form of human causality, and, as for Schelling, it is no longer an artificial nature which the artist creates, but the actual nature that we experience, in its highest form. This issue becomes essential to German philosophy after Kant, because of the rejection of the noumena by Fichte, the drawing out of the implications of this for art by Schelling, and the attempt

philosophy -- by Hegel.

Having undertaken this excavation project -- intended to bring the full meaning of creativity back to the surface of aesthetic discussion -- we can now see the full significance of Kant's rejection of the classical 'imitation theory' of art, however understood (i.e. Plato's understanding of it, or Aristotle's). And only now, in light of the broader metaphysical issues at stake, can much of the recent talk about artistic creativity be seen for the considerable trivialization of the issue that it is.

Between the serious foundations and the fashionable overuse of the notion of artistic creativity, there is an intellectual tradition, rooted in the former, which has helped lead to the latter. The possibility of human causality which is exempt from the laws of reason requires some metaphysical grounding -- that is, it requires that freedom from nature, as such, is plausible. In other words, the notion of a 'super-rational' or 'transrational' agent in general -- understanding rationality in the traditional or "theoretical" sense -- must be philosophically acceptable, before it makes sense to speak of humans possessing such a form of freedom. And this notion is precisely what enters philosophical discourse fully only with the medieval Christian thinkers. The so-called imitation theory of art -- either the belittling Platonic version, or the elevating

Aristotelian version -- is an attempt to explain art in a way that denies artists the impossible. Creation as such -- i.e. an exception to the laws of reason understood as the method of discovering nature -- cannot be attributed to a human being, as long as it is being denied to the cosmos itself. The Christian notion of divine creation -- of an absolutely free efficient causation -- paves the way for the modern philosophic sympathy for the idea of artistic creation. Kant's phenomena/noumena distinction is a way of cashing in on this principle of absolute freedom for the purpose of saving human dignity in the face of the New Science. We are all (as opposed to just God) free agents, in this strong, originative sense. And the symbol of our freedom is beauty, which, in its highest form (art), appears to be alongside nature as a part of experience, but which is a product of human design. Kant's depiction of artistic activity as the creation of a second nature, is clearly meant as an analogy with the traditional notion of divine creation, inasmuch as God had been thought to be the creator of the 'first' nature. It is essentially a metaphor. The artist has a god-like status. He cannot create from nothing, but, like the real God, his activity brings a new order into being. That is, a new ordering principle is brought into the cosmos, as though no order had previously existed. This is precisely the nature of human creativity,

and the point of analogy between the divine and the human.

This Kantian metaphor is carried further by Schelling and Hegel, who make the connection between divine and human (artistic) creation much more explicit. For them, the artist in principle, and the greatest artists in fact, are -- in one sense or another -- spatio-temporal vehicles of the atemporal divine creation, freely creating the necessary stages of Spirit's evolution toward completion. That is, for them, the divine creation unfolds historically -- ultimately for Schelling, and partly for Hegel -- through the human creators of beauty. In effect, they take Kant's argument for his metaphorical creativity seriously, but reject his appeal to the existence of an unknowable noumenal realm as the true ground of our freedom. This, as noted above, makes the link between human and divine creativity much more fundamental. The seeds of this radical notion, however, are in Kant.

And this is the point that I believe is lost in many twentieth century accounts of human creativity, including even some of the more philosophically and historically responsible ones. Tatarkiewicz, for example, notes the lack of any belief in the very possibility of creation within Greek metaphysics,[1] but goes on to draw a sharp distinction between the Christian theological notion of creativity, and that of artistic creativity in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries:

> In modern times... the concept of creativity was transformed; the meaning of the expression changed. And it changed radically: namely, the requirement 'from nothing' was dropped....
>
> With the new concept, a new theory arose: creativity was an exclusive attribute of the artist.[2]

Often, as in this passage, he talks of the concept of creativity having 'changed', even of its having changed "radically", but he seems not to regard this as of particularly major -- not to mention blasphemous -- metaphysical, as opposed to simply historical, significance. In other words, he seems not to consider the enormous changes wrought on the term 'creation' to be a significant philosophical extension of the medieval Christian notion, but instead to be a rather sudden (and somewhat mysterious) decision to use an old concept in a completely different way from that in which it had been used for several centuries. As we have seen, regardless of what may have followed, the origins of the philosophical defense of artistic creation do not involve a belief that only the artist is a creator, as Tatarkiewicz suggests in the above quotation. On the contrary, the view of the artist as a creator is grounded in the assumption of the existence of a divine creator, whose act is being emulated by the artist. I believe that Tatarkiewicz is probably correct in his depiction of the term's history, except that he misses one key point in that

history, namely the moment at which creation comes to be used to describe the artist's activity. This moment occurs primarily in Germany, and can be traced to Kant's theory of freedom, as has been shown.

The problem, as it appears to me, is revealed in the fact that Tatarkiewicz makes only passing reference to Rousseau, the German idealist avant la lettre, as it were; and the artist-as-creator theorist who is most often referred to is Coleridge, who was famously enamoured with Schelling. And yet Kant is never discussed in this context, and neither are Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. As we have seen, it is Kant who first fully elucidates the new meaning of creativity, deriving it from the old by way of analogy, and using it as a morally necessary sign of human freedom. Not acknowledging this metaphysical grounding for the extension of the term, Tatarkiewicz treats its devolution into its vague contemporary usage as merely a further 'radical change' in the concept.[3] I believe that this is a case of being historically accurate without paying sufficient attention to the reasons for historical changes. I hope to have shown that (a) Kant offers the first major philosophical defense of the notion of artistic creativity, (b) this defense is made necessary by a theory of moral responsibility inherited from medieval Christian thought and jeopardized by modern physics, and (c) this defense is made

plausible only by Kant's careful revitalization of the Christian notion of an efficient cause that is exempt from the laws (i.e. the order) discoverable by reason.

Tatarkiewicz, like many others, among both those who take these notions seriously and those who do not, seems to accept a lack of precise -- or at least stable -- significance to be inherent in the very term 'creation'. Ironically, after noting this, he concludes his discussion of creativity with the following:

> [T]here is no reason to get rid of the concept of creativity; it is not a working concept, but it is a useful watchword. One might say: it is not a scientific concept, but it is a philosophical one. Comparing art to an army, we would say that it is not like a sword or a rifle, but it is like a banner. Banners too are necessary, certainly at ceremonies and sometimes even in battle.[4]

Still, banners are only useful if we know what they represent, and why we are marching under them. The main purpose of this thesis has been to explain how formidable an army of ideas the banner of human creativity was originally meant to lead, before it was reduced to just another piece of abstract art.

1. Tatarkiewicz, Wladyslaw, A History of Six Ideas (Christopher Kasparek, translator), Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1980, p. 244-5.

2. Tatarkiewicz, p. 254.

3. Ibid., p. 260.

4. Ibid., p. 265.

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